The Christian Teaching

Tolstoï

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THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING

THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING

BY

LYOF N. TOLSTOÏ

TRANSLATED BY

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THIS book was not intended by the author for publication in its present form. Having worked at it for about two years, and remaining unsatisfied with its form of expression, Tolstoï put the book aside, hoping at some future time to return to it with fresh energy. But other works took possession of his attention, and not foreseeing the possibility of soon undertaking the definite elaboration of this writing, he, in the following words, gave me permission to publish it in its present form:

"Certainly, I regard this writing as unfinished and far from satisfying the demands which I myself should have put forward twenty years ago. But I now know that I shall not have time to finish it, to bring it to that degree of lucidity

which I should desire; and yet I think that, even in its present form, there may be found in it something useful to men. Therefore print and publish it as it is; and, God willing, if I become free from other works, and still have the strength, I will return to this writing and will endeavour to make it plainer, clearer and shorter.

"2d September, 1897."

INTRODUCTION.

I HAD reached the age of fifty, thinking that that life of man which occupies the time between birth and death, is all his life; and that therefore the end of man is happiness in this mortal life. So I tried to obtain this happiness. But the longer I tried, the more evident it became that this happiness does not, and cannot, exist. The particular happiness I sought I did not gain, whilst such as I did gain, immediately ceased to be happiness.

On the other hand, adversities continually increased, and the certainty of death became more and more evident. And I perceived that after this meaningless and unhappy life, nothing awaited me but suffering, illness, old age and annihilation. I asked myself, Why is

this? No answer was given me; I despaired.

That which some people told me, and of which I had sometimes tried to persuade myself, namely, that a man should desire happiness, not for himself only, but for others, his neighbours, and all men—this did not satisfy me. Firstly, because I could not sincerely desire happiness for others as much as for myself; secondly, and chiefly, because others, exactly like myself, were doomed to unhappiness and death. Therefore all my efforts for others' happiness were useless.

I despaired. Then I thought that my despair might proceed from something peculiar in myself; that others knew for what they lived, and so escaped despair. So I began to observe other people; but they, like myself, did not know for what they lived. Some, in the aimless round of life, tried to hide this ignorance; some assured themselves and others that they believed in the various religions instilled into them in childhood, belief in which religions was impossible, so foolish were

they. And of these last, many, it seemed to me, only pretended to believe, while in the bottom of their hearts they did not.

I could no longer follow the round of life, for no external occupation whatever could hide the problem before me. And I could not again believe the religion taught me in childhood, which of itself fell from me when I reached intellectual manhood.

The more I considered, the more I grew convinced that there was no truth in this religion, but only hypocrisy and venality in the deceivers, and weakness of mind, obstinacy and fear in the deceived.

Apart from the inner contradiction of this teaching,—its paltriness, its cruelty in confessing a God Who punishes men with eternal suffering,*—the principal thing which prevented my belief in it was the knowledge that side by side with the

* All these contradictions, absurdities and cruelties I exposed in detail in my work, *The Criticism of Dogmatic Theology*, where all the Church dogmas and theses, as taught in our theology, are examined in sequence.

Greek-Orthodox teaching of Christianity, which asserts itself as the only true one, there existed a second teaching of Christianity — the Roman Catholic; a third—the Lutheran; a fourth—Dissent; all these being at variance. Each one asserted itself as the only true teaching. I knew also that side by side with these Christian teachings, non-Christian teachings also existed—Buddhism, Brahmanism, Mohammedanism, Confucianism, and others; these also asserting themselves to be true, and all other teachings erroneous.

I could neither return to the religion taught me in my childhood, nor believe in any of those professed among other nations, because in all of them were the same contradictions, absurdities, miracles, rejection of all other religions and, above all, the deceit which demands blind confidence in the teaching.

After thus becoming convinced that I could not find the solution of my difficulty and the abatement of my sufferings in the existing religions, my despair was such that I was on the verge of suicide.

At this point salvation came—salvation, which was this. From childhood I had retained a vague idea that in the Gospel lay an answer to my question. In this teaching in the Gospel, despite all misrepresentations of it in the teaching of the Christian Churches, I felt the presence of truth, and as a last effort, putting aside all interpretations, I began to read and study the Gospel and penetrate its meaning. The further I penetrated, the more clearly a new understanding of the Gospel was revealed to me; quite different from that taught by the Christian Churches, and solving the problem of my life.

At length this solution became perfectly clear, and not only clear, but incontestable as well; because, firstly, it harmonised entirely with the demands of my reason and heart, and secondly, when I came to understand it, I saw that this was not my exclusive interpretation of the Gospel (as it might appear), nor even the exclusive revelation of Christ, but the very solution of the problem given more or less explicitly by the best among men

both before and after the Gospel was given; a succession from Moses, Isaiah, Confucius, the early Greeks, Buddha, Socrates, down to Pascal, Spinoza, Fichte, Fuerbach and all those, often unnoticed and unknown, who, taking no teachings on trust, thought and spoke sincerely upon the meaning of life. So that, in learning the truth I drew from the Gospel, I was not only not alone, but I was with all the best men of the past and the present. I became confirmed in this truth, and at peace; and I have since with gladness passed through twenty years of life and am with gladness drawing near to death.

This solution of the meaning of my life, which gave me full rest and joy of life, I desire to communicate to men.

My age and state of health are such that I am with one foot in the grave, and worldly considerations have no meaning for me. Even had they, I know that this exposition of my religion will not contribute either to my worldly profit or reputation, but, on the contrary, may only

exasperate and grieve both those unbelievers in religion who request literary work from me and not theological treatises, and those believers in religion who are indignant at all my religious writings, and abuse me for them. Besides, in all probability, this writing will be made public only after my death.* So that I am urged to what I do, not by wish for gain or fame, nor by any worldly considerations, but only by fear to fail in what is required from me by Him Who has sent me into this world, to Whom I am hourly expecting to return.

I therefore beg all those who shall read this to follow and understand my writing, putting aside, as I did, all worldly considerations and holding before them only that eternal Principle of truth and right by Whose will we have come into the world, whence, as beings in the body, we shall very soon disappear; without hurry or irritation, let them understand and judge what I say. If they disagree, let them correct me; not with contempt and

* See Translator's Preface.

hatred, but with pity and love. If they agree, let them remember that if I speak truth, that truth is not mine, but God's, and only casually part of it passes through me, just as it passes through every one of us when we behold truth and transmit it to others.

PART FIRST.



ANCIENT TEACHINGS AND THE NEW UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE.

THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING.

I.

THE ANCIENT TEACHINGS.

1. From the earliest times men have felt the misery, instability and senselessness of their existence, and have looked for salvation from this misery, instability and senselessness to a God, or Gods, who would deliver them from various calamities in this life, and, in a life to come, give to them that welfare which they had desired, but failed to obtain, in this.

2. Therefore from the remotest antiquity, there have been teachers in various nations who have instructed men as to the nature of the God, or Gods, by whom they might be saved; and as to the means of propitiation to be employed

in order to obtain rewards here or hereafter.

3. Some of these religious doctrines taught that God was identical with the sun, and personified in various animals; others identified the Gods with the earth and sky; others taught that God created the world, choosing from among all others one favoured nation; others, again, taught that there were many Gods, and that they participated in human affairs. Yet others taught that God had descended to earth in human form.

And, intermingling truth with error, all these teachers required of men, not only abstinence from actions regarded as evil, and performance of actions regarded as good, but also divers sacraments, sacrifices and prayers, supposed to especially insure welfare both in this world and the next.

II.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE ANCIENT TEACHINGS.

4. But the longer men lived the less these teachings satisfied the demands of the human soul.

5. In the first place, men saw that notwithstanding their fulfilment of the demands of their God, or Gods, they failed to obtain in this world the happiness to which they aspired.

6. Secondly, with the spread of enlightenment, these teachings about God, and the future life with its promised recompenses, were seen not to correspond with the present clearer conceptions of the universe, and consequently men's confidence in them grew weaker and weaker.

7. If, in former times, men could, without difficulty, believe that God created the world six thousand years ago; that the earth was the centre of the universe; that under the earth was hell; that God, after descending to earth, flew away again into the skies, and so forth; such beliefs have now become impossible, because men definitely know that the world has existed, not six thousand but hundreds of thousands of years; that the earth is not the centre of the universe, but only a planet, small in comparison with other heavenly bodies; that there can be nothing under the earth, because it is a sphere, and they know that it is impossible to fly into the skies, because there is no sky, the vault of heaven existing only to the eye.

8. Thirdly and chiefly, men's confidence in these various teachings was undermined by entering into closer intercourse with one another, and learning that in every country religious teachers preach their own peculiar doctrine as the only true one, denying the truth of all

others. Men, discovering this, naturally concluded that no one of these teachings was truer than another, and therefore that none of them could be accepted as the indubitable and infallible truth.

III.

THE NECESSITY OF A NEW TEACHING CORRESPONDING TO THE DEGREE OF ENLIGHTENMENT OF MANKIND.

9. The unattainableness of happiness in this life, the spreading enlightenment of mankind and the intercommunication of men by means of which they came to know the religious teaching of other nations, caused men's confidence in the doctrines they were taught to become weaker and weaker.

10. Yet the demand became more and more pressing for an explanation of the meaning of life, and for a solution of the contradiction between the desire for happiness and life on the one hand, and the increasingly clear perception of

the certainty of calamity and death on the other.

11. Man desires welfare and in it sees the meaning of his life; but the longer he lives the more clearly he sees that this welfare is impossible for him. Man desires life, and the continuation of life, but sees that both he and all that exist around him are doomed to inevitable destruction and disappearance. Man possesses reason, and seeks a reasonable explanation of the phenomena of life; but finds no reasonable explanation either of his own life or of the lives of others.

12. If in ancient times, the consciousness of this contradiction between the desire of human life for welfare and continuation, and the inevitableness of death and suffering, was attainable only by the best minds, like Solomon, Buddha, Socrates, Laotze and others, later on it became a truth open to all; and more than ever the solution of this contradiction became necessary.

13. And precisely at the time when the solution of this contradiction between

aspiration after welfare and life and the consciousness that they are unattainable had become so painfully necessary to men, it was given to them by the true original Christian teaching.

IV.

THE SOLUTION OF THE CONTRADICTION OF LIFE, AND THE EXPLANATION OF ITS MEANING GIVEN BY THE TRUE ORIGINAL CHRISTIAN TEACHING.

14. The ancient teachings tried to hide the contradiction of human life by their assertions of the existence of God as Creator, Preserver and Redeemer; the Christian teaching, on the contrary, shows men this contradiction in all its force, shows them that it must exist, and out of the acknowledgment of it derives the solution. This contradiction may be stated as follows:

15. It is true that on the one hand man is an animal, and cannot cease to be an animal while he lives in the flesh; but on

the other hand he is a spiritual being, rejecting all the demands of the animal in man.

16. During the first period of his life man lives without consciousness of living; hence it is not he that lives, but through him lives that power of life which lives in all we know.

17. Man only begins to live himself when he becomes conscious that he lives. He becomes conscious that he lives, when he knows that he desires for himself welfare, and that other beings have the same desire. This knowledge is given him by the awakening in him of reason.

18. Having found out that he lives and desires welfare for himself and that other beings have the same desire, man inevitably also discovers that the welfare he desires for his own separate being is unattainable ; and that, instead of the welfare he desires, inevitable suffering and death are awaiting him. The same calamities await all other beings. And there appears in this a contradiction, of which man seeks a solution; a solution

which will give to his life, such as it is, a reasonable meaning. He desires that his life should either continue as it was before the awakening of his reason, *i. e.*, purely animal, or else that it should be purely spiritual.

19. Man desires to be either a beast or an angel, but he can be neither the one nor the other.

20. And here we come to the solution of this contradiction given by the Christian teaching. It tells man that he is neither a beast nor an angel, but an angel being born of a beast—a spiritual-existence being born of an animal one; and that all our life in this world is naught else but this process of birth.

V.

THE BIRTH OF THE SPIRITUAL BEING.

21. As soon as man is born to reasonable consciousness, this consciousness tells him that he desires welfare; and his reasonable consciousness being born in his separate being, it seems to him that his desire for welfare relates to that separate being.

22. But that same reasonable consciousness which showed him himself as a separate being desiring for himself welfare, shows him also that this separate being is incompatible with that desire for welfare and life with which he associates it. He sees that this separate being can have neither welfare nor life.

23. "What then constitutes true life?" he asks himself; and he perceives that there is true life neither in himself nor in

those beings that surround him; but only in that which desires welfare.

24. And having discovered this, man ceases to regard his own isolated bodily and mortal being as himself, but regards as himself that being (inseparable from others, spiritual and therefore not mortal) which is disclosed to him by his reasonable consciousness.

This constitutes the birth in man of the new spiritual being.

VI.

WHAT IS THAT BEING WHICH IS BORN IN MAN?

25. The being that is revealed to man by his reasonable consciousness is the desire for welfare: that same desire for welfare which formerly also constituted the aim of his life, but with this difference—that the desire for welfare of the former being related to one separate corporeal being, and was not conscious of itself; whereas the present desire for welfare is conscious of itself, and relates not to anything isolated but to all that exists.

26. In the first period of the awakening of reason, it seems to man that the desire for welfare, which he recognises as his real self relates only to that body, in which it is enclosed.

27. But the clearer and firmer reason

becomes, the more clearly it appears, as soon as he is conscious of himself, that the true *self* of man is not his body (which is devoid of true life), but this very desire for welfare—the desire for the welfare of all that exists, *i. e.*, universal welfare.

28. The desire for universal welfare is that which gives life to all that does exist, it is that which we call God.

29. So that the being disclosed to man in his consciousness—this being that is coming to life—that which gives life to all that exists, is God.

VII.

GOD, ACCORDING TO THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING, IS KNOWN TO MAN WITHIN MAN HIMSELF.

30. According to the former teachings, in order to know God man had to believe what other men told him: how God, as it was supposed, created the world and men, and then revealed Himself to them; whereas, according to the Christian teaching, man recognises God within himself, directly through his own consciousness.

31. Consciousness reveals to man that the essence of his life is the desire for universal welfare; which is something inexplicable and inexpressible in words, and, at the same time, nearest and most comprehensible to man.

32. First appearing in man as the life of his separate animal being, then as the

life of those beings he loves, the principle of the desire for welfare displays itself after his reasonable consciousness is awakened as the desire for universal welfare. This desire is the source of all life, it is God; as said in the Gospel, "God is love."

VIII.

GOD, ACCORDING TO THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING, IS KNOWN TO MAN OUTSIDE MAN HIMSELF.

33. But besides God being known to man within himself as the desire for universal welfare, as love, man has also, according to the same teaching, knowledge of God outside man's self in all that exists.

34. Being conscious of the spiritual and unseparated being of God in his separate body, and seeing that same God present in all that lives, man cannot but ask himself why God, a spiritual being, one and indivisible, has enclosed Himself in the separate bodies of beings, and in man's own individual body.

35. Why has a spiritual and absolute being subdivided itself as it were? Why has the divine essence been confined in conditions of individuality and matter?

Why has the immortal been enclosed in the mortal, and bound up with it ?

36. There can be but one answer. There is a higher will, the motives of which are incomprehensible to man. And this higher will has placed man, and all that exists, where they find themselves. This same will, the desire for universal welfare, love—which has for some purpose undiscoverable by man enclosed itself in beings separate from the rest of the universe,—is that same God which man knows within himself, seen also outside himself.

So that, according to the Christian teaching, God is that Essence of life, which man recognises both within himself and in the whole universe, as the desire for welfare; and which is, at the same time, the cause by which this Essence is enclosed and conditioned in individual and corporeal life.

According to the Christian teaching, God is that Father Who, as we are told in the Gospel, sent into the world His Son like unto Himself, for the fulfilment in it of His Will, which is the welfare of all that exists.

IX.

THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE CONFIRMED BY THE OUTWARD MANIFESTATION OF GOD.

37. In reasoning man God manifests Himself as the desire for universal welfare; in the world God manifests Himself in separate beings, who strive each for his own welfare.

38. Although it is not, and cannot be, known to man why it was necessary for the one spiritual being, God, to manifest Himself in reasoning man as the desire for universal welfare, and in separate beings as the desire each for his own welfare, yet man cannot but see that both converge towards one distinct purpose, definite, attainable and joyful to man.

39. This purpose is revealed to man by

observation, tradition and reason. Observation shows him that all progress in human life (as far as known to us) has consisted only in men and other living beings, previously divided from and hostile to one another, becoming more and more united and bound together by agreement and mutual influence. Tradition shows him that all the wise men of the world have taught that mankind must pass from separation to union; that, as the prophet said, men must be taught of God, and spears and swords be beaten into ploughshares and pruning-hooks; that, as Christ said, all should be one even as He was One with the Father. Reason shows him that that greatest welfare of man, towards which all aspire, can be obtained only by perfect union and concord among men.

40. Therefore, although the ultimate purpose of the world's existence is hidden from man, he nevertheless knows in what consists the immediate work of the world's development in which he is called to take part, namely, the substitution of

union and harmony for division and discord.

41. Thus, observation, tradition and reason show man that this in which he is called to participate is the work of God. And the inner tendency of that spiritual being, love, which is in process of birth within him, draws him in the same direction.

42. The inner tendency of the spiritual being born in man consists solely in the increase of love within him. And this same increase of love, and nothing else, precisely concurs with that work which is being accomplished in the world,—the substitution of union and harmony for division and discord,—called in the Christian teaching the establishment of the kingdom of God.

43. So that, were there any doubt as to its truth, this concurrence of man's inner aspirations with the tendency of the life of the whole world would corroborate the Christian definition of life and its meaning.

X.

LIFE IN THIS WORLD AS REVEALED TO MAN BY THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING.

44. On being born to new life, man is conscious that in his isolated individuality is enclosed love—the desire for welfare, not for himself only but for all that exists.

45. Were this desire for universal welfare, this love, not enclosed in a separate being, it would be unconscious of its own existence, and always remain equal to itself; but being enclosed in the limits of a separate being—man,—it is conscious of itself and its limits and tends to rend asunder that which imprisons it.

46. By its nature, love tends to comprise all that exists. It expands its limits naturally by, first, love to one's own

family, one's wife and children, then to friends, then to one's fellow-countrymen; but love is not satisfied with this and tends to embrace all.

47. The essence of man's true life in this world consists precisely in this continual expansion of the limits of the domain of love, that essential of the new life born in man. Man's sojourn in this world, from birth till death, is nought else than the birth in him of the spiritual being, and this unceasing birth is that true life referred to in the Christian teaching.

48. One can imagine that what now composes our body, that apparently separate being loved by us in preference to all else, at some period of our past lower life was but an accumulation of beloved objects which love united into one, so that in this life we feel it to be ourselves; and that, in the same way, our present love for that which is accessible to us may, in a future life, unite all these objects into one whole being, which will be as near to us as is our body now. ("In my Father's house are many abiding-places.")

XI.

IN WHAT DOES THE TRUE LIFE REVEALED BY THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING DIFFER FROM THE FORMER LIFE?

49. The difference between personal life and true life is this: The aim of the personal life is to increase the enjoyment of external life and prolong it; but notwithstanding all his efforts, this end is never attained, because man has power neither over the external conditions which hinder enjoyment, nor over the various calamities which may at any time overtake him. Whereas the aim of the true life is the expansion and intensification of love, and this nothing can hinder, for all external causes (such as violence, disease, suffering, which hinder the realisation of the aim of the personal life) co-operate to

further the accomplishment of the spiritual aim.

50. The difference is the same as between those labourers mentioned in the Gospel parable, some of whom, being sent into the master's garden, decided that it belonged to them and withheld the fruits from their master; while the others, acknowledging themselves to be but labourers, fulfilled the master's instructions.

PART SECOND.



SINS.

XII.

WHAT HINDERS MAN FROM *LIVING* THE TRUE LIFE?

51. In order to fulfil his destiny, man must increase love within himself and manifest it in the world; and this increase and manifestation of love is exactly what is necessary to accomplish the work of God. But how can man induce the manifestation of love?

52. The basis of man's true life is the desire for universal welfare. Love in man, being enclosed within the limits of a separate being, naturally tends to expand those limits; therefore it is not necessary that man should do anything to induce the manifestation of love; it tends of its own accord to manifest itself; man need only clear away the obstacles that impede it.

What, then, are these obstacles?

53. The obstacles that hinder the manifestation of love by man are his body—its separateness from other beings—and the fact that beginning his life with infancy, during which period he lives only in the animal life of his separate being, he cannot later on, even when reason is awakened, altogether disentangle himself from desiring the welfare of his separate being, and so commits acts opposed to love.

XIII.

THE NATURE OF THE OBSTACLES TO LOVE'S MANIFESTATION.

54. Love, the desire for universal welfare in its efforts towards its own manifestation, meets with obstacles in man's body largely because reason, which sets love free, wakes in man, not at his first appearance on earth, but considerably later, when he has already developed habits of animal life. Why is this ?

55. Man cannot but ask himself this question: Why is a spiritual being, love, enclosed within the separate being of man ? And this question is answered variously by different teachings. Some pessimistic teachings reply that the enclosure of the spiritual being within man's body is a mistake which must be corrected by the destruction of the body—of the

animal life. Other teachings say that the supposition of the existence of a spiritual being is a mistake, and must be corrected by recognising that only the body and its laws have any real existence. Neither view of the matter really solves the problem; one simply denies the lawfulness of the body, the other, that of the spirit. The Christian teaching alone harmonises the apparent contradiction.

56. To the suggestion of the Tempter that Christ should destroy his body if he could not according to his own will satisfy all the demands of his animal life, Christ answered that one must not resist the will of God, Who has sent us into life as separate beings; but that in this separate being we must serve Him alone.

57. For the solution of the contradiction of life according to the Christian teaching, it is necessary neither to destroy the life of the separate being, which would be contrary to the will of God, who has sent it, nor to submit to the demands of the animal life of the separate being, *i. e.*, acting in opposition to the spiritual ele-

ment which constitutes the true "self" of man; but in that body which encloses the true self of man, to serve God alone.

58. The true "self" of man, the infinite love which lives within him, always tending to increase and constituting the essence of his life, is enclosed within the limits of the animal life of the separate being, and tends always to liberate itself from it.

59. This liberation of the spiritual being from the animal individuality, this birth of the spiritual being, constitutes the true life of man, individual and collective.

60. Love in every separate man and in all mankind, is like steam confined in a boiler: the steam expands, drives the pistons and performs the work. As, in order that the steam may do its work, there must be the resistance of the boiler, so also that love may accomplish its work, there must be the resistance caused by the limits of the separate being which encloses it.

XIV.

OBSTACLES TO TRUE LIFE.

61. During infancy and childhood, and sometimes even later, man lives as an animal, fulfilling the will of God then known to him as the desire for the welfare of his own separate being; and he knows no other life.

62. Having awakened to reasonable consciousness, man still continues to consider as himself this separate body, although he knows that his life is really in his spiritual being, and owing to contracted habits of animal life he performs acts directed towards the welfare of the separate being, and which are contrary to love.

63. By so doing man not only deprives himself of the welfare of true life, but fails to obtain the welfare of his separate

being: acting thus, he commits *sins*.* It is these sins that constitute the inborn obstacles to the manifestation of love in man.

64. And these obstacles are increased by the circumstance that men of former generations, having committed sins, transmitted the habits and forms of them to succeeding generations.

65. So that having in childhood acquired habits connected with the personal life of his separate being, and having also these same habits of personal life transmitted to him from his ancestors by tradition, every man is always liable to sins—obstacles to the manifestation of love.

* The reader is requested to bear in mind that words such as sin, snare, prayer etc., are here used by the author not in any theological meaning, but in the sense which he clearly defines when he first introduces them. Thus, wherever further used, the term *sins* implies obstacles to the manifestation of love. (TRANS.)

XV.

THREE KINDS OF SINS.

66. There are three kinds of sins.

(a) Sins which proceed from the ineradicable tendency of man towards his own personal welfare while living in the body—innate, natural sins.

(b) Sins which proceed from the traditions of the institutions and customs directed to the increase of the welfare of separate persons—traditional, social sins.

(c) Sins which proceed from the tendency of individual man towards the greater and greater augmentation of the welfare of his separate being—personal, artificial sins.

67. Men commit innate sins when they place their welfare in the preservation and increase of the animal welfare of their separate personalities. Every activity

directed towards increasing the animal welfare of one's personality is such an innate sin.

68. Traditional sins are those which men commit when they profit by existing modes of adding to the welfare of their separate personalities—modes instituted by men who have lived in former times. All profiting by institutions and customs established for the welfare of one's personality is traditional sin.

69. Personal or artificial sins are those which men commit when, in addition to traditional ones, they invent new modes of increasing the welfare of their separate personalities. Every new mode invented by man for the increase of the welfare of his separate personality is such a personal sin.

XVI.

CLASSIFICATION OF SINS.

70. There are six sins or obstacles to the manifestation of love in man:

I. The sensual sin, which consists in preparing for oneself pleasure by the satisfaction of one's needs.

II. The sin of idleness, which consists in liberating oneself from the labour necessary to the satisfaction of one's needs.

III. The sin of avarice, which consists in acquiring for oneself power to satisfy one's needs in the future.

IV. The sin of ambition, which consists in subjugating to oneself one's fellow-creatures.

V. The sexual sin, which consists in arranging for oneself pleasure from sexual instinct.

VI. The sin of intoxication, which consists in producing artificial excitement of one's physical and mental faculties.

XVII.

SENSUAL SIN.

71. Man must of necessity satisfy his bodily needs, and in the unreasoning state he satisfies them completely like every other animal, neither restraining himself nor adding to this satisfaction, and in this he finds welfare.

72. But, on first awakening to reasonable consciousness, it seems to man that the welfare of his separate being consists in the satisfaction of his needs and he devises means of increasing the pleasure arising from this satisfaction. He also utilises the means of pleasurable satisfaction of individual needs originated by his predecessors, and himself invents new and still more pleasant means of gratification.

This constitutes sensual sin.

73. When a man eats or drinks, not being hungry; when he dresses not for the purpose of protecting his body from the cold; when he builds a house, not for the purpose of sheltering himself from the weather; but does these things in order to increase the pleasure arising from satisfying his need, he commits innate sensual sin.

74. When a man who has been born and bred in habits of superfluity in drink, food, dress and lodging, continues to maintain these habits and to profit by the superfluity he possesses, such a man commits traditional sensual sin.

75. When a man already living in luxury invents additional, new and pleasanter means of satisfying his needs, such as are not used by those around him; when he introduces new and more refined foods and drinks in place of his former simple fare, new finer clothing in place of the former clothing which sufficed to cover his body; builds another house with new adornments in place of the

former small simple one, and so on,—such a man commits sensual sin.

76. Sensual sin, innate, traditional or personal, consists in man impeding his birth into the new spiritual life by striving after the welfare of his separate being through the gratification and increase of his needs.

77. Besides this, man, while acting thus, does not attain the end toward which he strives, because by adding to his wants he reduces the probability of being able to satisfy them, and also weakens the pleasure arising from their satisfaction. The more frequently a man eats, and the more refined the foods he consumes, the less pleasure will he derive from eating; and thus also it is with regard to the gratification of all other animal needs.

XVIII.

THE SIN OF IDLENESS.

78. Man also, like the animals, must exert his strength, and this strength is naturally directed towards obtaining those things necessary for the satisfaction of his needs. After work thus directed, man, like the animals, requires rest.

79. Before reaching his state of true consciousness, man, like the animals, in procuring for himself objects necessary for life, does indeed alternate work with rest; and in this natural rest finds welfare.

80. But with newly awakened reason, man dissociates work from rest, and finding rest pleasanter than work, tries to prolong the one and diminish the other, compelling others by force or cunning to supply his needs. This constitutes the sin of idleness.

81. When a man, profiting by the labour of others, rests when he might still work, he commits the innate sin of idleness.

82. When a man has been born and still lives in a position where, not being himself obliged to work, he profits by the labour of others, and maintains this state of things, such a man commits the traditional sin of idleness.

83. When a man has been born and continues to live among those who are accustomed to profit by the labour of others, and invents means of liberating himself from even such work as he formerly performed and lays this work also on others; when a man who formerly cleaned his own clothes compels another to do it, or having formerly written his own letters, kept his own accounts or transacted his own business, compels others to do this work, while he himself uses his leisure time for rest or recreation, then such a man commits the personal sin of idleness.

84. The fact that a man cannot do

everything for himself, and that division of labour often improves and facilitates work, cannot justify a man in liberating himself either from work in general, or from heavy work in favour of light work. Every product of labour which a man uses demands corresponding labour from him, not mitigation of his labour, nor complete liberation from it.

85. The sin of idleness, innate, traditional or personal, consists in man relinquishing his own work and profiting by the labour of others, the reverse of what he was intended to do, since true welfare is obtained only by service of others.

86. Besides, the man who acts thus fails to obtain even that pleasure which he seeks, as, the enjoyment of rest being attained only after work, the less work the less enjoyment from rest.

XIX.

THE SIN OF AVARICE, OR PROPERTY.

87. Man's position in the world is such that his bodily existence is secured by general laws, to which he is subject, in common with all animals. Yielding to his instinct, man must work. The natural object of his work is the satisfaction of his needs; and this work always more than suffices to secure his existence.

Man is a social animal, and the fruits of his labour so accumulate in society that, but for the sin of avarice, every man unable to work might always have what is necessary for the satisfaction of his needs. Hence, the Gospel saying, about taking no thought for the morrow, but living "as the birds of the air," is no metaphor, but a statement of the actual law of all

social animal life. In the Koran, likewise, it is said that there is no one animal upon the earth to which God does not give its sustenance.

88. But as, after awakening to reasonable consciousness, it long continues to appear to man that his life consists in the welfare of his separate being, and as this being is conditioned in time, man takes special care to insure the satisfaction of the future needs of himself and his family.

89. This special insurance of future needs is possible only by withholding the necessaries of life from others, and this is the nature of what we term property. It is this endeavour to obtain, keep and increase property to which man directs his efforts that constitutes the sin of avarice.

90. When a man regards as his exclusive possession the food which he has prepared or received for use on the morrow, or the clothing or shelter for his own or his family's use in the coming winter, he commits the innate sin of avarice.

91. When a man of awakened consciousness finds himself in such circumstances

that he regards certain objects as exclusively his own, and withholds them from others notwithstanding they are not necessary to secure his life, he commits the traditional sin of avarice.

92. When a man, while already possessing those things which are necessary to insure the satisfaction of the future needs of himself and family, also things not necessary for the maintenance of life, and notwithstanding this secures for himself more and more possessions, which he withholds from others, he commits the personal sin of avarice.

93. The sin of avarice, whether innate, traditional or personal, consists in man doing the opposite of that for which he was intended, in endeavouring to insure the future welfare of his separate being by amassing property and withholding it from others: instead of serving men, he takes from them that which is necessary to them.

94. Moreover, the man who acts thus never attains his object, for the future is not in the power of man, he may die at

any moment, and by spending the unmistakable present upon an unknown and uncertain future he makes an evident mistake.

XX.

THE SIN OF AMBITION—LOVE OF POWER.

95. Man, like the animals, is placed under such conditions that he is obliged to engage in a struggle with other beings for the satisfaction of any of his needs.

96. The animal life of man is sustained only to the detriment of other beings. Struggle is the natural condition and law of animal life. And while living an animal life, before the awakening within him of consciousness, man finds welfare in this struggle.

97. But when reasonable consciousness is awakened, it seems to him during the first period of this awakening that his welfare will be increased, if he subjugates and conquers the greatest possible number

of beings. Accordingly he uses his powers to subjugate to himself men and other beings. This constitutes the sin of ambition.

98. When a man thinks it necessary to struggle in order to preserve his personal welfare, and does so with those men and animals that wish to subjugate him, such a man commits the innate sin of ambition.

99. When a man has been born and has grown up under certain conditions of power—whether he be the son of a king, a lord, a merchant or a well-to-do peasant—and, remaining in this position, does not cease from the strife—which though sometimes unnoticed is always necessary to maintain his position,—then he commits the traditional sin of ambition.

100. When a man in certain permanent conditions of struggle, wishing to increase his welfare, enters into new contests with men and other beings; when he attacks his neighbour in order to take possession of his property or lands; or strives, by obtaining privileges, diplomas, rank, to secure a higher position than he occupies;

or, wishing to increase his possessions, contends with competitors or labourers or with other nations, such a man commits the personal sin of ambition.

101. The sin of ambition—innate, traditional or personal—consists in man using his powers for the attainment of the welfare of his separate being by means of strife, thus acting in direct opposition to the conditions of true life. Instead of increasing love within himself—that is, abolishing the obstacles which separate him from other beings, he adds yet more obstacles.

Besides this, by entering into contest with men and other beings man attains the very opposite to that for which he strives; he adds to the probability that other beings will attack him, and, instead of subjugating others, that he himself will be subjugated by them; and the more he succeeds in the struggle, the greater will be the necessary strain.

XXI.

THE SEXUAL SIN.

102. The instinct of the continuation of the race—the sexual instinct—is innate in man, and in the animal condition he fulfils his destiny by satisfying this instinct, and in so fulfilling it finds welfare.

103. But with the awakening of consciousness, it appears to man that the gratification of this instinct may increase the welfare of his separate being, and he enters into sexual intercourse, not with the object of continuing the race, but to increase his personal welfare. This constitutes the sexual sin.

104. The sexual sin differs from all others in this respect: that whereas in other cases complete abstinence from innate sin is impossible, and only a diminu-

tion is attainable, complete abstinence from the sexual sin is possible. This is so because entire abstinence from the satisfaction of personal needs—food, clothing, shelter—would destroy the individual, as would also deprivation of all rest, all property, all struggle, but abstinence from satisfying the sexual instinct does not destroy the individual. The abstinence of one, several, or many persons from sexual intercourse would not end the race, to perpetuate which is the object of the sexual instinct. So that satisfaction of this instinct is not obligatory upon every man; but to every individual is left the possibility of abstaining from it.

105. Man is, as it were, allowed the choice between two ways of serving God. Either, by keeping free from married life and its consequences, he may by his own life in this world himself fulfil all that God has appointed to be fulfilled by man; or else, conscious of his own weakness, he may transmit to the posterity he has begotten, nourished and brought up the fulfilment, or at least the possibility of

fulfilment, of that which he has himself neglected.

106. From this peculiarity of the sexual instinct compared with all others, result two different degrees of sexual sin dependent on which of the two alternatives a man chooses.

107. In the first case, when man desires to keep chaste * and to consecrate all his powers to the service of God, sexual sin will consist in any sexual intercourse whatever, even though it have for its object the birth and rearing of children. The purest married state will be such an innate sin for the man who has chosen the alternative of chastity.

108. The traditional sin for such a man will be any continuation of sexual intercourse, although it be in married life and have for object the birth and rearing of children. Relinquishment of traditional sin for such a man will consist in the complete cessation of sexual intercourse.

* The words chaste and chastity are used by the author in their Russian signification, which includes complete abstinence from sexual intercourse.—(TRANS.)

109. The personal or artificial sin for such a man will be to enter into sexual intercourse with any other person besides the one with whom he has already entered into the marriage relation.

110. In the case of a man choosing the service of God by the continuation of the race, the innate sin will consist in any sexual intercourse which has not that for its object, such as prostitution, casual connections, marriages for wealth, position or amativeness.

111. The traditional sin for such a man will consist in any sexual intercourse from which children cannot be born, or entered into when the parents are unable or unwilling to bring up the children born of their union.

112. When a person—man or woman,—having chosen the second alternative of contributing to racial continuation, and already in sexual relation with one person, enters into similar relation with others, not for the sake of forming a family, but in order to increase the pleasure arising from sexual intercourse; or avoids the

birth of children; or becomes addicted to unnatural vices,—such a person commits the personal sexual sin.

113. The sexual sin, *i. e.*, mistake, for the man who has chosen the service of chastity, consists in this. He might have chosen the highest vocation, and used all his powers in the service of God and consequently for the spread of love and towards the attainment of the highest welfare, instead of which he descends to a lower plane of life and deprives himself of this welfare.

114. The sexual sin or mistake for the man who has chosen to continue the race, will consist in the fact that, by depriving himself of having children, or at all events of family relationships, he deprives himself of the highest welfare of sexual life.

115. In addition to this,—as with the gratification of all needs,—those who try to increase the pleasure of sexual intercourse diminish the natural pleasure in proportion as they addict themselves to lust.

XXII.

THE SIN OF INTOXICATION.

116. In his natural state, man, like every animal, is liable to be stimulated by external agencies, and this temporary excitement gives pleasure to him in his animal condition.

117. Having awakened to consciousness, man notices what causes this state of excitement and tries to reproduce and intensify these causes in order to induce stimulation. With this object he procures and takes into his stomach, or inhales, substances which produces excitement; or he arranges such surroundings, or performs such special vigorous movements as will bring him into this condition. This constitutes the sin of intoxication.

118. This sin is exceptional in that,

whereas all other sins, by strengthening the tendency in him to continue the animal life, simply divert the man who is born to new life from the activity proper to him and do not in themselves weaken or violate the activity of his reason, the sin of intoxication not only weakens the activity of reason, but temporarily, and sometimes permanently, destroys it. In fact, the man who produces this unnatural excitement in himself by smoking, wine, certain imposing surroundings or by vigorous movements (as do the Dervishes and other religious fanatics) commits, while in this condition, not only actions proper to animals, but even such as by their senselessness and cruelty are unnatural to animals.

119. The natural innate sin of intoxication consists in the circumstance that man, having received pleasure from a certain state of excitement, whether it be produced by food or drink, by surroundings which operate upon his sense of sight or hearing or by certain movements, does not abstain from what produces this intoxication. When a man, without the

set intention of exciting himself, eats spices, drinks tea, beer or cider, adorns himself or his dwelling, dances or plays, he commits the innate sin of intoxication.

120. When a man has been educated in certain habits of intoxication, such as the use of wine, tobacco or opium, imposing sights—public, family or religious,—certain kinds of movements—gymnastics, dances, bows jumping and so on,—and perpetuates these habits, he commits the traditional sin of intoxication.

121. When a man, having been educated in and become accustomed to certain habits of periodical intoxication, introduces through imitation or himself invents new modes of intoxication: after the use of tobacco begins to smoke opium, after wine drinks brandy, introduces new imposing ceremonies, produces increased excitement by means of pictures, dances, light or music or invents new modes of exciting physical movements, such as gymnastics, cycle riding etc., this man commits the personal sin of intoxication.

122. The sin of intoxication—innate, traditional or personal—consists in a man endeavouring by external causes of excitement to weaken and obscure the consciousness which reveals to him the meaning of his true life, instead of using his powers of mind to remove all that tends to dim that consciousness.

123. Furthermore, the man who acts thus, produces an effect opposite to that for which he strives.

The excitement produced by external causes diminishes with every dose of the stimulant, and notwithstanding the strengthening of the doses (which ruin the health), the faculty of excitation grows constantly weaker.

XXIII.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SINS.

124. Sins act as obstacles to the manifestation of love.

125. But more than this, they also cause the greatest calamities to men. These calamities are twofold: those suffered by the men who commit the sins, and those suffered by others. The calamities which befall those who commit the sins are effeminacy, satiety, weariness, apathy, anxiety, fear, suspicion, anger, hatred obduracy, jealousy, impotence and painful diseases of every description. The calamities to which others are subjected are theft, robbery, torture, beating, murder.

126. If there were no sins there would be neither poverty nor satiety, neither

depravity nor theft, robbery nor murder, executions nor wars.

127. Were it not for sensual sin, there would be neither the destitution of the needy, nor the weariness and fear of the luxurious; there would be neither the unnecessary expenditure of effort in guarding the pleasures of the rich, nor the degradation of the spiritual powers of the poor; the constant inherent struggle between the two classes which produces contempt and fear in the one and jealousy and hatred in the other, would not exist, neither would this enmity break out periodically in violence, slaughter and revolt.

128. But for the sin of idleness, one would not on the one hand see men exhausted by overwork, and on the other vitiated by inaction and constant amusement; men would not be divided into two hostile camps—the surfeited and the famished, the festive and the overburdened.

129. Were there no sin of avarice, there would be none of that violence

which is committed for the sake of acquiring and retaining property; there would be no theft, robbery, imprisonment, exile, penal servitude nor executions.

130. Were there no sin of ambition, there would be none of that enormous and useless expenditure of human energy for the purpose of subduing others and of maintaining power; there would be neither the arrogance and heartlessness of the conqueror, nor the obsequiousness, deceit and hatred of the conquered; there would be no family, social and national divisions, nor the quarrels, fights, murders and wars arising from them.

131. But for the sexual sin there would not exist the slavery and suffering of woman side by side with over-indulgence and depravity; there would be none of those quarrels, fights, murders, caused by jealousy; there would exist neither the degradation of woman to the condition of an instrument for the satisfaction of lust, prostitution nor unnatural vice; neither the enfeeblement of the physical and

mental powers—those dreadful diseases from which men now suffer,—nor forsaken children, nor infanticide.

132. Were it not for the sin of intoxication by the use of tobacco, wine and opium, and by wild, exciting movements and imposing solemnities, men would be free from recklessness in their sins. There would not be a tithe of the quarrels and fights, the plunderings, adulteries and murders that now occur chiefly in consequence of the weakening of the spiritual powers; and there would be none of that useless expenditure of energy upon things not merely unnecessary but often positively harmful. Avoiding it, men—in many cases excellent men—would avoid that stupefaction which now causes them to spend their lives without profit to themselves, and as a burden to others.

PART THIRD.



SNARES.

XXIV.

WHAT ARE SNARES?

133. The pernicious consequences of sins, both to those who commit them and to the society in which they are committed, are so evident that from the earliest times, seeing these calamitous consequences, men have preached and legislated against sins, and punished those who have committed them. Theft, murder, dissoluteness, slander, drunkenness, have been forbidden, but, notwithstanding the prohibitions and punishments, men have continued, and still continue, to sin, destroying their own lives and those of their fellows.

134. This arises from the fact that for the justification of sins there exist false arguments, according to which there

would appear to be exceptional circumstances, rendering sins not only excusable, but even necessary. These false justifications may be called "snares."

135. A snare (Greek, "scandalos") signifies a trap; and indeed a moral snare is a trap into which a man is enticed by the similitude of good, and in which, when caught, he perishes. Thus it is said in the Gospel that snares (causes of stumbling) must come into the world, but woe to the world because of them, and woe to him through whom they come!

136. It is in consequence of these snares —these deceptive justifications—that men do not turn from their sins, but continue in them, and worst of all, inculcate them upon their posterity.

XXV.

THE ORIGIN OF SNARES.

137. The birth of a man to the new life is not accomplished at once, but, like the physical birth, by degrees. The pangs of birth alternate with pauses and reversions to the former position; manifestatons of spiritual life alternate with manifestations of animal life; man now gives himself up to the service of God and in it finds his welfare, now returns to personal life, seeks the welfare of his separate being and commits sin.

138. Having committed sin, man becomes conscious of the want of harmony between the act performed and the demands of the conscience. As long as he only desires to commit sin, this discord is not fully evident; but, as soon as the sin

is committed the discord is revealed and man wishes to end it.

139. It is only possible to end the discord of the act, and the position into which man has entered through sin, by using one's reason to find a justification for the act and the position.

140. This justification of the contradiction between sin and the demands of the spiritual life can only be achieved by explaining one's sins as the result of the demands of the spiritual life. This is precisely what men do. And by this mental exercise they ensnare themselves.

141. From the time when the contradiction between the animal and the spiritual life was revealed to man, from the time when man began to commit sins, he began also to devise justifications of sins —*i. e.*, snares. There have therefore been established among men identical traditional justifications, or snares; so that a man need not himself devise justifications for his sins for the snares are already invented and he has but to accept them ready-made.

XXVI.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF SNARES.

142. There are five snares which ruin men: the personal snare, or snare of preparation; the family snare, or snare of the continuation of the race; the snare of activity, or utility; the snare of fellowship, or fidelity; and the State snare, or snare of the general good.

143. The individual snare, or snare of preparation, consists in man, while committing sins, justifying himself by the consideration that he is preparing for an activity which will be useful to him in the future.

144. The family snare, or snare of the continuation of the race, consists in a man justifying himself on the ground of his children's welfare.

145. The snare of activity, or utility, consists in a man justifying his sins by urging the necessity of continuing or completing some work, already begun, which shall be useful to men.

146. The snare of fellowship, or fidelity, consists in the justification of man's sins by the consideration of the welfare of those with whom he is in some special relationship.

147. The State snare, or snare of the general good, consists in men justifying the sins they commit by the consideration of the welfare of a number of people, of a nation, of humanity. This snare was expressed by Caiaphas, when he demanded the execution of Christ in the name of the welfare of many.

XXVII.

THE PERSONAL SNARE, OR SNARE OF PREPARATION.

148. "I know the meaning of my life is not in service of self, but in service of God or man," says the man who has fallen into this snare, "but in order that my service may be effectual, should certain digressions from the demands of conscience be necessary for that perfecting which will prepare me for future useful activity I will admit them. I must first acquire knowledge, finish my term of service, re-establish my health, marry, secure a livelihood for the future and while attaining these ends I cannot fully obey the demands of conscience; but having accomplished this, I will then begin to live exactly as my conscience demands."

149. And, having admitted the necessity of looking after his personal life for the sake of the greater, more effectual service of men and the manifestation of love in the future, man serves his own person, committing sins. He commits sensual sin, the sin of idleness, of property, of ambition and even of depravity and intoxication, not regarding it as a matter of importance, because the indulgence in it is only temporary, during the time that all his powers are directed to preparing for his future active service of men.

150. But having begun to serve his person—protecting, strengthening, perfecting it—man naturally forgets the object for which he is doing so, and gives up his best years, sometimes his whole life, to preparing himself for a service which he never performs.

151. In the meanwhile the sins which he has allowed himself to commit for a good object become more and more habitual; and, in place of the supposed useful activity for others, he passes his

whole life in sins which ruin it, and by serving as a temptation to other men, injure them also. This constitutes the snare of preparation.

XXVIII.

THE FAMILY SNARE OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE RACE.

152. People, especially women, entering upon family life, are liable to think that love for their family, for their children, is exactly what reasonable consciousness demands of them; and that therefore, should one have to commit sins to satisfy the needs of the family, such sins are excusable.

153. And, convinced of this, such people think it possible in the name of family love, not only to release themselves from the demands of justice towards others, but, with the certainty that they are acting rightly, to commit, for the sake of their children's welfare, the grossest cruelties towards others.

154. "If I had no wife, husband, children," say those who have fallen into this snare, "I would live quite differently, and would not commit these sins, but the education of my children being necessary I cannot now live otherwise. If we did not live thus, if we refrained from these sins, the human race would cease."

155. And thus arguing, not seeing the evil he is doing, a man will quietly take from others the result of their labour, compel them to labour to the detriment of their life, deprive them of their land and—most striking example of all—will rob a child of its milk, in order that its mother may feed his child. This constitutes the family snare, or the snare of the continuation of the race.

XXIX.

THE SNARE OF ACTIVITY.

156. Man is by nature obliged to exercise his mental and physical powers, and with this object chooses a certain activity.

157. Every activity demands the performance of certain actions at certain times, and if these are not performed in their season useful work is destroyed without benefit to anyone.

158. Those who have fallen into this snare say; "I must finish harrowing my field which is already sown, unless I do this, both seed and labour will be lost without advantage to anyone; I must finish a certain work within a certain time, for should I not finish it, work, which might have been useful, will be lost; I have a factory, which produces articles

necessary to man, and affords employment for ten thousand workmen, if I interrupt the work, the goods will not be manufactured, and the men will be thrown out of employment."

159. And having argued thus, a man not only does not leave his field unharrowed in order to rescue his neighbour's horse from a swamp, but is ready to take advantage of his neighbour's misfortune to finish it. Not only does he decline to leave urgent work so that he may sit for a day by a sick man's bedside, but he is ready to withdraw another man from nursing an invalid merely in order that his own appointed work may be finished. He not only does not stop the work of his factory, which is destroying men's health; but he is even ready to sacrifice the health of several generations, in order that salable goods may be produced. This constitutes the snare of activity, or utility.

XXX.

THE SNARE OF FELLOWSHIP.

160. Having casually or artificially entered into certain common conditions, people are inclined to join with others in the same conditions and separate themselves from other men, and to think their duty requires them to disregard the dictates of conscience for the benefit of those similarly conditioned men. Not only do they prefer the interests of these—" their own "—to the interests of others, but they even injure other men, in order not to violate their fidelity to " their own."

161. " The deeds of these people are obviously evil, but they are our companions, and therefore their iniquities must be hidden, justified. What I am asked to do is evil, senseless; but all my com-

panions have decided on it, and I cannot stand aloof. It may cause suffering and calamity to others, but for us and our fellowship it will be pleasant, therefore it must be done."

162. There are various fellowships of this nature. Of such are the fellowships of murderers or thieves, deeming fidelity to their companions in crime more binding than loyalty to their conscience, which condemns the deed; the fellowships of pupils in educational establishments, of communities of workers, of regiments, scientists, clergy, kings, nations.

163. All these men regard fidelity to the regulations of their fellowships as more binding than faithfulness to the dictates of conscience with regard to their conduct towards other men. This is the snare of companionship, or fidelity.

164. The peculiarity of this snare is that the wildest and most senseless acts are committed in its name, such as dressing oneself up in peculiar garments, and attributing to them a special importance. In its name also men poison themselves

with wine and beer; and, by exciting hostility between different fellowships, it frequently causes dreadfully cruel deeds, fights, duels, murders and so forth.

XXXI.

THE SNARE OF THE STATE.

165. Men live in a certain social organisation, and this organisation (like everything else in this world) continually changes with the development of consciousness in man.

166. But people, especially those for whom the existing order is more advantageous than for others (and there always are such), regard the existing order as conducive to the welfare of all. Therefore, for the sake of this welfare they not only deem it allowable to act unlovingly towards certain people, but also believe it to be just and good to commit the grossest iniquities so that the existing order may be maintained.

167. Men have instituted the right of

property, and some possess land and the means of production, while others have neither. And this unjust possession of land and the means of production by those who do not work is regarded as the order which must be maintained, and in the interests of which it is believed to be just and good to imprison and execute those who infringe this order. So, also, lest a neighbouring nation or sovereign should attack or subdue our nation, and abolish or change the established order, it is thought just and good, not only to co-operate in the organisation of the army, but to be oneself prepared to murder men of another nationality, and actually to go and slay them.

168. This snare is peculiar in that, whereas in the name of the first four snares men transgress the demands of their consciences and individually commit evil deeds, in the name of the State snare are committed most awful collective iniquities, such as executions and wars; and most cruel crimes against the masses, such as slavery in the past, and the withhold-

ing of the land from the labourers in the present. Men would be unable to commit these iniquities had they not invented certain combinations by means of which the responsibility is so distributed that no one feels its weight.

169. This distribution of responsibility is accomplished by the acknowledgment of the necessity of an authority to ordain these crimes for the benefit of those under its rule: so that, for the sake of the common welfare, its subjects must obey the injunctions of authority.

170. Those in authority say: "I much regret being obliged to order the appropriation of the products of labour, to commit men to prison, exile, penal servitude, to exact the penalty of death, to wage wars, but it is my duty to act thus, for it is demanded of me by those who have endued me with power." Those in a subordinate position say: "If I rob men of their property, tear them away from their families, imprison, exile, execute them; if I ruin or kill men of another nation, bombard towns containing women

and children, I do all this, not upon my own responsibility, but in fulfilment of the will of the higher power, which, for the general welfare, I have promised to obey." This constitutes the snare of the State, or of the general welfare.

XXXII.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SNARES.

171. Sins are the result of habits (inertia, animal life). The impetus of the animal life cannot cease at the moment when reason awakens in man and he understands the senselessness of his animal life. Although he now knows that animal life is meaningless and cannot give him welfare, owing to confirmed habit he still seeks for meaning and welfare in the pleasures of animal life, in the satisfaction of complicated artificial needs, in continual rest, in the accumulation of property, in power over others, in depravity, in intoxication; and he uses his reason for the attainment of these ends.

172. But sins bring with them their own punishment; man very soon finds

that the welfare he seeks in this way is unattainable, and sin loses its attraction. So that, but for the justifications of sins —snares—men would not continue in their sins, and would not carry them to the extreme they now do.

173. Were it not for the snares of preparation, the family, activity, and the State, no one, however cruel, would be able, surrounded by men dying of starvation, to profit by those superfluities which the rich now enjoy; and the rich could never reach that condition of complete physical idleness in which they now spend their dreary lives, often compelling the old, the infirm and children to perform the work they require done. If it were not for these snares justifying property, men could not senselessly and aimlessly spend all their vital powers in accumulating property which cannot be used; neither could they, while suffering from the results of strife, call it forth in others. But for the snare of fellowship there would not be a tithe of the depravity that now exists; nor could people so obviously

and foolishly destroy their mental and physical powers by intoxication, which diminishes, instead of increasing, their energy.

174. The sins of men cause the destitution and overwork of some and the opulence and idleness of others. It is sins that cause inequality of possessions, competition, quarrels, litigation, executions, wars, the calamities of depravity and the brutalisation of men. But to snares are due the permanence and *sanctification* of all this—the legalisation of the destitution and oppression of some, and of the opulence and idleness of others, the legalisation of violence, murder, war, depravity, intoxication and the awful stage of development to which these evils have now attained.

PART FOURTH.



RELIGIOUS DECEPTION, AND THE MEANS OF DELIVERANCE FROM IT.

XXXIII.

RELIGIOUS DECEPTION.

175. If it were not for snares, people could not continue to live in sin, as every sin avenges itself. The men of former generations would have pointed out to their successors the injurious consequences of sins, and a new generation would have been educated without contracting habits of sin.

176. But man using his reason, not for the understanding of sin and deliverance from it, but for its justification, snares appear, and sin is legalised and confirmed.

177. How can a man whose reason is awakened mistake falsehood for truth? In order that he may not detect the lie, and may accept it for truth, his reason

must be perverted; for the unperverted reason infallibly discerns falsehood from truth, this being its purpose.

178. The reason of men educated in human society is, in truth, never free from perversion. Every man educated in human society inevitably undergoes the perversion of religious deception.

179. This deception consists in men of former generations instilling into succeeding ones by various artificial means an understanding of the meaning of life founded, not upon reason, but upon blind confidence.

180. The essence of religious deception is the intentional confusion of faith and credulity, and the substitution of one for the other. It is affirmed that without faith man cannot live and think—which is perfectly true; and then in the place of faith—*i. e.*, the acknowledgment of the existence of that of which one is conscious, but which cannot be defined by reason, such as God, the soul, good—is substituted confidence that there exists a God in a certain form, in three persons,

who at a stated time created the world and who has revealed certain things to men, at certain places and times and through particular prophets.

XXXIV.

THE ORIGIN OF RELIGIOUS DECEPTION.

181. Humanity moves slowly but unceasingly onward towards a higher and higher development of consciousness of the true meaning of life, and towards the organisation of life in conformity with this development of consciousness. Men's understanding of life, and the life itself of humanity is thus constantly changing. Men who are more sensitive to truth understand life according to that higher light which now shines within them and order their lives in accordance with it; less sensitive men adhere to the former understanding and order of life and try to uphold it.

182. So that, side by side with men

who point out the most advanced and recent expressions of truth and endeavour to live in accordance with them, there are always in the world men who uphold the outlived and now unnecessary understanding of truth and the order of life based on it.

XXXV.

THE PRACTICE OF RELIGIOUS DECEPTIONS.

183. Truth needs no external corroboration, being freely accepted by all to whom it is transmitted; but falsehood demands special methods by which it may be transmitted to men and adopted by them; and the same methods to achieve this end have always been made use of by men.

184. There are five such methods: 1. The misinterpretation of truth. 2. Faith in the miraculous. 3. The institution of intermediaries between God and man. 4. Influence exerted upon man's senses. 5. The inculcation of erroneous faith upon children.

185. The first method of religious de-

ception consists in not only verbally acknowledging the justice of the truth revealed to men by the latest teachers, but also admitting the teacher himself to be a sacred supernatural person—deifying him, attributing the performance of various miracles to him and at the same time concealing the very essence of the truth revealed, so that, instead of its condemning the former understanding and order of life, it may, on the contrary, confirm it.

Such misinterpretation of truth and deification of its teachers have been practised in all nations on the appearance of a new religious doctrine. The teaching of Moses and of the Jewish prophets was perverted thus. And with this same misinterpretation did Christ reproach the Pharisees, saying that they were sitting in Moses' seat, and entering not into the kingdom of God, but hindered those who were entering. The teachings of Buddha, Lao-Tze and Zoroaster were similarly misinterpreted; so also was the Christian teaching at the time of its acceptance by

Constantine, when heathen temples and deities were transformed into Christian ones, and Mohammedanism arose to counteract a pseudo-Christian polytheism, itself to fall a prey both in the past and now to a similar misinterpretation.

186. The second method of religious deception consists in assuring men that in the search for truth it is sinful pride to use the reason given them by God, that there is another and more reliable means of attaining to truth, consisting in revelations made by God to chosen men, the reliability of which revelations is supposed to be confirmed by certain signs, miracles —*i. e.*, supernatural events,—which accompany them. One is told to believe, not reason, but miracles—*i. e.*, that which is contrary to reason.

187. The third method of religious deception consists in persuading men that they cannot have that direct relation with God which every man feels (and which was made especially clear by Christ, when he acknowledged man as the son of God), and that for communion between man and

God an intermediary (or intermediaries) is necessary. In this position of intermediary are placed prophets, saints, the Church, Holy Writ, recluses, dervishes, Llamas, Buddhas, hermits and clergy of every description. Whatever diversity may exist between them, the essence of their office consists in the denial of direct relation between God and man, and the affirmation that truth is not directly accessible to man, but can be received by him only through faith in intermediaries between him and God.

188. The fourth method of religious deception consists in the practice of collecting a number of people together under the pretext of performing certain actions supposed to be demanded by God—such as prayers, sacraments, sacrifices,—and, after submitting these people to various stupefying influences, impressing falsehood upon them in the guise of truth. People are entranced by the beauty and grandeur of temples, by the magnificence of ornaments, vessels and vestments; by the lustre of artificial light, the sound of

voice and organ, by incense, intonations, pageants, and while under the spell of this fascination, an attempt is made to impress upon their souls falsehood presented as truth.

189. The fifth method is the most cruel of all; it is contained in the answers given to the child's questions as to the nature of this world, of his own life and the relation between the two. He questions his elders who, having lived longer than he, have had an opportunity of acquiring the knowledge of former generations; but he receives in reply, not what these elders themselves think and know, but what was thought by men who lived thousands of years ago, and is not and cannot be now believed by any grown-up person. Instead of the indispensable spiritual food for which the child asks, he receives a poison destructive to his spiritual health, to recover from the effects of which will cost him the greatest effort and intensest suffering.

190. A child awakens to conscious life with a clear, unobstructed understanding,

conscious in the depth of his soul, though vaguely, of the truth of life—*i. e.*, his position and duty—and ready to accept it. (The human soul is naturally Christian, according to the early Father Tertullian.) This child asks his more experienced parent or teacher, What is life? What is my relation to the universe, and to its source? And the father or teacher, instead of giving him the little but certain knowledge of the meaning of life he has himself acquired, assures him with authority of that which he, in the depth of his soul, regards as untrue. If he be a Jew, he tells him that God created the world in six days, and revealed the whole truth to Moses by writing with his finger upon a stone that oaths must be adhered to, the sabbath kept, circumcision practised and so on. If he be an Orthodox Greek, a Catholic or a Protestant Christian, he says that Christ, the Second Person, created the world and descended to earth to redeem Adam's sin with his own blood and so on; if a Buddhist, that Buddha flew up into the heavens, and

taught men to destroy their life; if a Mohammedan, that Mohammed visited the seventh heaven, and there learned the law, according to which a fivefold prayer and a pilgrimage to Mecca procure for man paradise in the future life!

191. Parents and teachers, although they know that other men instil other ideas into their children, pass on each his own particular superstition, knowing, in the depth of his soul, that it *is* only superstition, and they transmit this to innocent, trustful children, at an age when impressions are so deep that they are never afterwards completely effaced.

XXXVI.

THE EVIL CAUSED BY RELIGIOUS DECEPTION.

192. Sin, causing man to at times commit acts contrary to his spiritual nature—to love,—impedes his birth to the new true life.

193. Snares, by justifying sins, lead man into a life of sin, so that he not only commits certain sinful acts, but, while living an animal life, does not perceive it to be in contradiction to the true life.

194. Such a position is possible only when the truth is perverted by religious deception. No man, whose understanding is not thus perverted, can be blind to the falsehood of snares.

195. Religious deception is, therefore, the foundation of all the sins and calamities of mankind.

196. Religious deception is that which is called in the Gospel "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost," concerning which it is said that it cannot be pardoned —*i. e.*, it can never, in any life, fail to be ruinous.

XXXVII.

THE WAY TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING OF CHRIST.

197. In order to live according to the teaching of Christ, man must destroy the obstacles which impede true life, or the manifestation of love.

198. These obstacles are sins. But sins cannot be destroyed until man frees himself from snares. And freedom from snares is possible only to the man who is free from religious deception.

199. Therefore, in order to live according to the teaching of Christ, man must first of all free himself from religious deception.

200. Only after having freed himself from this can a man liberate himself from the falsehood of snares; only after seeing the falsehood of snares can he free himself from sins.

XXXVIII.

ESCAPE FROM RELIGIOUS DECEPTION.

201. In order to free himself from religious deception in general, man must understand and remember that the only instrument he possesses for the acquisition of knowledge is reason, and therefore that every teaching affirming what is contrary to reason is a delusion, an attempt to set aside the only instrument for acquiring knowledge which God has given to man.

202. In order to escape from religious deception, man must understand and remember that he has not, and cannot have, any other instrument of knowledge but reason—that, whether he will or no, every man believes only in reason. They therefore deceive themselves who say that

they believe in Moses, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, the Church, the Koran, the Bible, but not in reason, because, whatever their faith, they believe, not in the medium which transmits the truths in which they believe—not in Moses, Buddha, Christ, the Bible,—but in reason, which tells them that they must have faith in Moses, Christ, the Bible, and not in Buddha or Mohammed, and vice versa.

203. Man can receive truth only through his reason. The man therefore who thinks that he receives truth through faith, and not through reason, only deludes himself, and uses his reason for a purpose for which it was never intended —namely, to solve questions as to which of those who transmit that which is given out as truth one must believe, and which reject. Whereas reason is intended, not to decide between whom one must and must not believe (this, indeed, it cannot do), but to verify the truth of what is presented to it. This it can always do; for this purpose it was designed.

204. Misinterpreters of truth generally

say that one cannot trust reason because its assertions vary in different men, and that it is therefore better, for the sake of union, to believe in revelation confirmed by miracles. But such a statement is directly opposed to fact. Reason never makes opposite assertions, but always and in all men asserts or denies the same thing.

205. It is only "faiths" which assert: one that God revealed Himself on Sinai, and is the God of the Hebrews; another, that God is Brahma, Vishnu and Siva; another that He is the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Ghost; a fourth, that He is identical with heaven and earth; a fifth, that the whole truth was revealed by Buddha; a sixth, that all was revealed by Mohammed. It is only these faiths that divide men, whereas reason, whether it be the reason of a Jew, a Japanese, a Chinaman, an Arab, an Englishman or a Russian, always says one and the same thing.

206. When it is said that reason can deceive, and in confirmation of this are

cited the contradictory assertions of different people as to the existence or nature of a God, and the way in which He must be served, they make a mistake, and, intentionally or unintentionally, confuse reason with speculation and invention. Speculations and inventions, it is true, may be and are infinitely diverse and numerous, but the conclusions of reason are the same for all men at all times. Speculations and inventions about the origin of the world and of sin, and as to what will happen after death, may be infinitely various, but the conclusions of reason as to whether it is true that three Gods are one, that a man died and then rose again, that he walked upon the water or flew away into the sky, that in consuming bread and wine I consume flesh and blood—the conclusions of reason about these questions are the same for all men in all the world, and are undoubtedly correct. Whether a Jew affirm that God walked in a flame of fire, or a Hindoo that Buddha ascended in the rays of the sun, or whether it be affirmed that Mo-

hammed flew into heaven, or Christ walked on the water and so forth, the reason of all men always and everywhere gives the same answer: "It is not true." But to the question, "Is it right to act towards others as you would have them act towards you? Is it good to love men, to pardon their offences and to be merciful?" the reason of all men, at all times, answers: "Yes, it *is* right, it *is* good."

207. Therefore, to avoid falling a prey to religious deception, man must understand and remember that truth is revealed to him only through reason, given him by God for the purpose of discovering the will of God, and that the practice of inspiring distrust in reason is founded on the desire to deceive, and is the greatest blasphemy.

208. Such are the general means of liberating oneself from religious deception. But in order to escape it, one must know all its methods and beware of and strive against them.

XXXIX.

ESCAPE FROM RELIGIOUS DECEPTION INCULCATED FROM INFANCY.

209. In order that a man may live according to the teaching of Christ, he must first of all free himself from the religious deception in which he was educated, whether this deception be Hebrew, Buddhist, Japanese, Confucian or Christian.

210. And in order to do so, a man must understand and remember that he has received reason directly from God, who alone can unite all men; whereas human traditions do not unite, but divide. He must, therefore, while verifying the beliefs inculcated from infancy, have no fear of the doubts and questions which reason calls forth, but must, on the contrary,

carefully submit all that has been transmitted to him to examination and comparison with other creeds, and, however ancient the transmitted traditions may be, or however impressive their surroundings, must acknowledge none as true which contradict reason.

211. Having submitted the beliefs inculcated from childhood to the judgment of reason, the man who wishes to quite free himself from this mode of religious deception must boldly and unreservedly throw aside all that is contrary to his judgment, not doubting for a moment that what is thus contrary must be untrue.

212. Having freed himself from the religious deception taught him from childhood, the man who wishes to live according to Christ's teaching must himself refrain from contributing to the deception of children by word, example or by silence, and must also expose this deceit by every possible means, following the example of Christ, who pitied children on account of those deceptions to which they are subject.

XL.

ESCAPE FROM THE RELIGIOUS DECEPTION CAUSED BY ACTION ON THE SENSES.

213. Having freed himself from the religious deception inculcated from infancy, man must avoid the deception produced by deceivers of all nations by means of external influence on the senses.

214. To avoid falling under this deception, man must understand and remember that the propagation and acceptance of truth by men require neither apparatus nor adornments; that only falsehood and deception demand special conditions for their transmission; and therefore that all solemn services, processions, ornaments, perfumes, songs and so forth, are no proof of truth, but on the contrary serve

to show that falsehood, not truth, is being transmitted.

215. To avoid falling under deception by action on the senses, man should call to mind the words of Christ, that God must be served, not in any particular place, but in spirit and truth, and that he who wishes to pray should go, not into the temple, but into the solitude of his own room, knowing that all external splendour in the worship of God has for its object deception, which deception is the more cruel the more magnificent the ceremony. He should, therefore, not only himself refrain from participating in stupefying acts of worship, but should also, when possible, expose this deceit.

XLI.

ESCAPE FROM THE DECEPTION OF MEDIATION.

216. Freed from the second deception of action on the senses, man has yet to avoid the deception of mediation between God and man, which will certainly conceal the truth from him if he surrenders to it.

217. That he may not fall under this deception, a man must understand and remember that God only reveals Himself directly to man's heart, and that every intermediary, whether it be one person or a collection of persons, a book or a tradition, not only hides God from man, but also causes the most dreadful evil which can befall him, namely, that he should regard as God that which is not God.

218. As soon as man admits faith in any kind of mediation, he deprives himself of the only possible means of authenticating his knowledge, and incurs the liability of accepting any kind of falsehood in the place of truth.

219. It is owing to mediation alone that men have practised and continue to practise those dreadful deceptions owing to which reasonable and good men pray, as if to God, to Christ, the Virgin Mary, Buddha, Mohammed, Saints, relics and images.

220. In order to avoid this deception, man must understand and remember that truth is revealed to him primarily and most reliably, not in a book, nor by tradition, nor through any assembly of men, but in his own heart and reason, as Moses declared when he told the people that the law of God must be sought neither over the sea, nor in the sky, but in one's heart; and as Christ taught the Jews when he said that they knew not the truth, because they believed the traditions of men instead of him who was sent by God.

And it is reason, the only infallible instrument whereby to attain to knowledge, that is sent into us by God.

221. To avoid the deception of mediation, man must understand and remember that truth cannot be at once revealed in its fulness, but is disclosed to man by degrees. Further, that it is disclosed to those only who seek it, and not to those who, believing what is transmitted to them by so-called infallible intermediaries, think that they possess it. In order, therefore, not to incur the danger of falling into the most dreadful errors, man must regard no one as an infallible teacher, but must seek the truth everywhere in all human traditions, verifying them by his own reason.

XLII.

ESCAPE FROM FAITH IN MIRACLES.

222. But, having freed himself from the deception inculcated in childhood, avoided that of impressive ceremonies, and rejected all intermediaries between himself and God, man will not yet be free from religious deception and capable of understanding Christ's teaching, unless he liberate himself from faith in the supernatural, the miraculous.

223. It is said that miracles, *i. e.*, the supernatural, are performed with the object of uniting men; but in fact nothing so disunites them, for every religion has its own miracles, and repudiates those of all others. Nor can this be otherwise. The miraculous, or supernatural, is infinitely various; the natural only is everywhere and always the same.

224. So, to escape the deception of faith in the miraculous, man must acknowledge as true only that which is natural, which is in accordance with his reason, and must recognise as false all that is unnatural—that contradicts his reason,—knowing that all that is given out as such is human deception, as are various contemporary miracles, cures, raisings of the dead, miraculous images, relics, the transformation of bread and wine, etc., and as are the miracles related in the Bible, the Gospels, and in the Buddhist, Mohammedan, Lao-Tzian and other scriptures.

XLIII.

ESCAPE FROM THE DECEPTION OF MISINTERPRETATION OF TRUTH.

225. Having escaped from the deception of mediation, man must also free himself from that of misinterpretation.

226. Whatever be the religion a man has been educated in, whether it be Mohammedan, Christian, Buddhist, Hebrew or Confucian, in every one he will meet, side by side with assertions which are unquestionably true, and accepted by his reason, assertions contrary to reason, which are represented as equally reliable.

227. If he would free himself from this deception, man must not be troubled by the fact that the assertions acknowledged by reason and those rejected by it are given out as equally certain, and as of the

same origin, and are apparently inseparably connected. He must understand and remember that every revelation of truth to man, *i. e.*, every new understanding of truth by one of the more advanced men, has always so impressed people that they have enclosed it in a supernatural form. To every manifestation of truth an element of superstition has inevitably been added, so that to discover the truth it is imperative that he should separate falsehood and fiction from truth and reality, and not, on the contrary, accept all that has been transmitted concerning the revelation of the truth.

228. Having separated truth from the added superstition, let it be understood and remembered that the element of superstition is not only not as sacred as the truth itself (as those affirm who benefit by these superstitions), but, on the contrary, constitutes the most pernicious medium of the concealment of truth, to destroy which man must exert all his powers.

PART FIFTH.



LIBERATION FROM SNARES.

XLIV.

THE WAY TO AVOID SNARES.

229. Man, having liberated himself from religious deception, would be ready to accept the teaching of Christ, were it not for snares. But, though freed from religious deception, and understanding Christ's teaching, he is always in danger of falling into snares.

230. The essence of all snares consists in this, that man, having awakened to consciousness, experiences the discord and suffering caused by sin, and seeks to escape both, not by striving against the sin, but by justifying it.

231. And sin cannot appear to be justified except by deception.

232. Therefore, in order to avoid falling into snares, man must not fear to recog-

nise the truth, knowing that its recognition cannot remove him further from welfare, whereas untruth is the chief source of sin and of man's departure from welfare.

233. So, to escape snares, man must, above all, avoid lying, especially to himself; being careful not so much to abstain from lying before others as to himself, *i. e.*, not hiding from himself the motive of his actions.

234. Further, if a man would avoid snares and the resulting sin and ruin he must not be afraid to repent of his sins, repentance being the only means of liberation from sin and the calamities arising from it.

235. Such are the means whereby men may avoid falling into snares in general. But, in order to be able to avoid each particular snare, one must clearly understand what constitutes its deception and harm.

XLV.

THE DECEPTION OF THE SNARE OF PREPARATION (THE PERSONAL SNARE).

236. The first and most common snare into which man falls is the personal snare, that of making preparations to live, instead of living. If a man does not himself invent this justification of his sins, he will always find it already invented by men who have lived before him.

237. "I can now," says man, "for a time, diverge from the path of duty, from what is demanded by my spiritual nature, because I am unready. I will first prepare myself, and then, when the time comes, I will begin to live altogether in accordance with my conscience."

238. The deception of this snare consists in man turning aside from life in the pre-

sent, which is the only actual one, and hoping for life in the future, whereas the future does not belong to him.

239. The deception here is made clear by the circumstance that, if a man foresee the morrow, he must also foresee the next day, and the next and so on, and if he foresee all this, he will also foresee his inevitable death. And, foreseeing that, he will not make preparations for the future of a life which is approaching its termination, because death destroys the meaning of all that for which man prepares in this life. If a man give free scope to his reason, he cannot but see that the life of his separate being is senseless, and that he can therefore make no preparation for it.

240. The deception is also revealed by the consideration that man cannot prepare himself for a future manifestation of love and of service to God. Man is not a tool that is used by someone else. You may sharpen an axe, and if you have no time to use it, it can be used by someone else, but no one can utilise a man save the man himself, because he is a tool continu-

ally working and perfected only by work.

241. The evil of the snare is that the man who has fallen into it, while looking forward to a life in the future, which never comes, not only fails to live the true life, but even loses the temporal life of the present. Thinking to perfect himself for the future, man relinquishes that perfecting in love which can be accomplished only in present and which is the life's purpose of every man.

242. In order to avoid falling into this snare, man must understand and remember that there is no time for preparation; that he must live in the best way possible now, as he is; that the only perfecting he needs is the perfecting in love, and that this is accomplished only in the present.

243. He must therefore, without delay, live each moment in the present with all his powers, for God, *i. e.*, for all who make demands upon his life, knowing that it is precisely for this continual service he has come into the world, and that at any moment he may be deprived of the possibility of rendering it.

XLVI.

THE DECEPTION AND EVIL OF THE SNARE OF ACTIVITY.

244. A man occupied on a certain piece of work is involuntarily captivated by it, and it appears to him that, for the sake of that work, he may refrain from doing what is required of him by his conscience, by God.

245. The deception in this snare consists in the fact that any human work may turn out useless or may be interrupted and remain unfinished, whereas the work of God, which is accomplished by man through the fulfilment of the will of God, can neither prove useless nor in anywise be interrupted.

246. The evil in this snare is that, having decided that some particular work—

whether it be raking over seeds or liberating a nation from slavery — is more important than the work of God, *i. e.*, the immediate help and service of one's neighbour (often the most insignificant work in human judgment), there will always be found work which it is necessary to finish before complying with the demands of the work of God. Man will thus continually excuse himself from the service of God—from the accomplishment of the work of life—by substituting the service of what is dead for the service of that which is living.

247. Having fallen into this snare, men will always postpone the service of God until they shall be free from all worldly activity; whereas from worldly activities men are never free. To avoid falling into it, man must understand and remember that no human activity which has an end can be the aim of a true eternal life, which aim can be nothing but the participation in the endless work of God, which consists in the greatest possible manifestation of love.

248. Therefore, in order to escape the snare of activity, man must do no work of his own that violates the work of God, that violates love to men; and he must always be ready to relinquish any occupation, when summoned to the accomplishment of that work. Like a workman employed on his master's work, he should attend to his own affairs only when his powers and attention are not required for his master's work.

XLVII.

THE DECEPTION AND HARM OF THE FAMILY SNARE.

249. This snare is used, more than any other, to justify men's sins. Persons free from the snare of preparation for life, or that of activity, are rarely free—especially if they be women—from the family snare.

250. This snare consists in men, in the name of exclusive love for the members of their own family, regarding themselves as free from duties to others, and calmly committing sins of avarice, ambition, idleness and lust, without regarding them as sins.

251. The deception of this snare consists in the fact that the animal propensity drawing men towards the continuation of the race (which is lawful only in so far as

it does not violate love to mankind) is regarded as a virtue justifying sin.

252. The evil of this snare is that, more than any other, it strengthens the sin of property, intensifies strife among men by exalting as a merit and a virtue the animal instinct of love towards one's family, and diverts men from knowledge of the true meaning of life.

253. To avoid falling into this snare, man must refrain from intentionally developing in himself this family love, from regarding this love as a virtue, and from yielding to it. And knowing the snare, he must be always on his guard against it, so as not to sacrifice the divine for the family love.

254. One can without caution love one's enemies, unattractive people, strangers, and altogether give one's self up to this love; but one cannot without caution love the members of one's own family, because such a love leads to moral blindness, and justification of sins.

255. In order not to fall into this snare, man must understand and remember

firstly that love is true, bestowing life and welfare, only when it neither seeks nor expects nor hopes for recompense, just as no other manifestation of life expects recompense for its existence. Secondly, that love for one's family is an animal instinct, which is good only so long as kept within the limits of an instinct, and so long as man does not sacrifice spiritual demands for its sake.

256. Therefore, in order to avoid this snare, man must endeavour to do for every stranger the same that he wishes to do for his family, and not do for his family such things as he is not ready and able to do for a stranger.

XLVIII.

THE DECEPTION AND EVIL OF THE SNARE OF FELLOWSHIP.

257. Having separated themselves from others and linked themselves together under certain exceptional conditions, men think that, if they maintain these conditions, they are performing such a good work that it liberates them from the general demands of conscience.

258. The deception of this snare consists in the circumstance that by entering into fellowship with a certain small number of people, men cut themselves off from the natural fellowship of all, and consequently violate the most important natural duties in the name of artificial ones.

259. The evil of the snare is that men

who have bound themselves together in separate fellowships, and whose lives are guided by their own special rules and not by the common laws of reason, depart further and further from those reasonable principles of life common to all men, become less tolerant and more cruel to all outside their fellowship, and thus deprive themselves and others of true welfare.

To avoid falling into this snare, man must understand and remember that the rules of fellowships organised by men may be infinitely various, changeable and contradictory, that no rule artificially ordained by man should bind him, if it be contrary to the law of love, and that every exclusive union limits the circle of fellowship and deprives man of the chief source of welfare, possibility of loving communion with all on earth.

260. He should therefore not only refrain from entering all societies, fellowships and associations, but should avoid all that may exclude him, in union with others, from the rest of mankind.

XLIX.

THE DECEPTION AND EVIL OF THE STATE SNARE.

261. This cruellest of snares is, like false religion, transmitted to men by two modes of deception,—inculcation of falsehood upon children, and influence exerted on the feelings of men by external solemnities. On awakening to consciousness, almost every man who lives in a state finds himself already entangled in State snares, and living under the persuasion that his is a superior special people, state, country, for the welfare and advancement of which he should blindly obey the existing government, and at its bidding torture, wound and slay his fellows.

262. The deception of this snare consists in the assumption that, for the sake

of the welfare of his nation, man may disregard the requirements of conscience, and sacrifice his moral freedom.

263. The evil of this snare is that as soon as we admit the possibility of ascertaining and understanding what constitutes the welfare of a number of people, there is no limit to conjecture as to the resultant welfare from any act whatever; so that any act may be justified the moment a man assumes that the welfare or life of one man may be sacrificed for the sake of the future welfare of many. There is no limit to the evil that can be done in the name of such reasoning. The first assumption—that we can know what will promote the future welfare of many—has been responsible in former times for torture, the inquisition and slavery, and in our time, for courts of law, prisons and landed property. Acting on the second assumption — that of Caiaphas, — Christ was slain in the past, and at the present time millions perish by execution and war.

264. In order to avoid falling into this

snare, man must understand and remember that before belonging to any state or nation, he belongs to God, being a member of a universal kingdom, and that so far from being able to transfer to anyone the responsibility for his actions, he must himself alone always be answerable for them.

265. Therefore man must under no circumstances prefer men of his own nation or state to those of another; no consideration as to the future welfare of many must ever induce him to do harm to his neighbours; and he must not think that he ought to obey anyone whomsoever in preference to his own conscience.

PART SIXTH.



THE STRUGGLE WITH SINS.

L.

STRIVING AGAINST SINS.

266. But, although they may have freed themselves from religious deception and avoided snares, men still fall into sins. A man with awakened consciousness knows that the meaning of his life consists only in the service of God, and yet, owing to habit, he commits sins, which hinder both the manifestation of love, and the attainment of true welfare.

267. How, then, is man to strive against the habit of sin ?

268. Before he can successfully so strive he must in the first place clearly understand the consequences of sins: that they do not accomplish the purpose for which they are committed, that they do not increase, but rather diminish the animal

welfare of men. Secondly, he must know in what order to contend with the sins.

269. Firstly, therefore, one should clearly understand and remember that the conditions of man's life in this world are such that after the awakening of reasonable consciousness every search for personal welfare deprives him of this welfare, and that, on the contrary, he obtains welfare only when he does not think of his personal well-being, but uses all his powers in the service of God. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all the rest shall be added unto you."

270. Secondly, for success in striving against habits of sin one must know to which sin one should first direct one's attention, not beginning by striving against a sin which has its roots in another as yet unconquered one, but recognising their mutual connection and succession.

LI.

THE RIGHT ORDER IN WHICH TO CONTEND WITH SINS.

271. There is a connection and sequence between sins by which one sin engenders others, or hinders liberation from them.

272. Man cannot liberate himself from any sins as long as he addicts himself to the sin of intoxication; he cannot liberate himself from the sin of ambition if he yield to that of avarice, or from avarice while he is addicted to the sin of idleness; he cannot free himself from sexual sin if he addicts himself to sensual sin and that of idleness; and he cannot liberate himself from ambition and avarice so long as he yields to sensual sin.

273. This does not mean that one

should not strive against every sin at all times, but that, for success in the contest, one should know with which to begin, or rather with which one cannot begin.

274. It is often only this striving against sins in the wrong order which causes that want of success which drives men to despair.

275. The sin which, while yielded to, precludes the possibility of all contest with others, is intoxication by means of stupefying substances, impressive surroundings or exciting actions. The intoxicated man resists neither idleness nor sensuousness, sexual propensities nor ambition. Therefore, in order that he may contend with other sins, he must first of all liberate himself from that of intoxication.

276. The next sin from which a man must liberate himself if he would have power to strive against sensuousness, avarice, ambition and sexual sin, is idleness. The freer a man is from the sin of idleness, the easier it is for him to abstain from sensuousness, avarice, sexual sin

and ambition. A man who is working requires no elaboration of the means of satisfying his needs, does not require property, is less liable to sexual temptations, and has neither the occasion nor the leisure for contest with his fellows.

277. Next comes the sensual sin. The more abstemious a man is in food, clothing and habitation, the easier it will be for him to liberate himself from avarice, ambition and sexual sin. Satisfied with little, he does not need property, restraint helps in the struggle with sexual desires, and, having need of little, he has no reason for conflict with his fellows.

278. The next sin is avarice. The freer man is from this sin, the easier will it be for him to refrain from sexual sin and from ambition. Nothing so encourages sexual sin as superfluity of property, and nothing so promotes conflict among men.

279. The next is the sin of ambition, or competition, which is included in and promoted by all the other sins, and liberation from which is possible only in conjunction with liberation from them all.

LII.

THE WAY TO STRIVE AGAINST SIN.

280. It is possible to strive successfully against sins in general only when we know their successive order, so that we may commence with those without freedom from which we cannot contend against the others.

281. But even in the contest with each separate sin, one must begin with those manifestations of it which are within man's power to abstain from and which have not yet become habitual.

282. Such manifestations are, in every kind of sin—intoxication, idleness, sensuousness, avarice, ambition, sexual sin,—the personal sins, those which men commit for the first time, not yet being

habituated to them. Therefore it is from those sins that a man must first of all free himself.

283. It is only after having liberated himself from these sins—after having ceased to invent new means of augmenting his personal welfare, that man can begin to contend against the habits and traditions of sin established in his particular circle.

284. And only when he has conquered these traditional sins can a man begin to strive against innate ones.

LIII.

STRIVING AGAINST THE SIN OF INTOXICATION.

285. The purpose of man's life is the manifestation and increase of love; this increase takes place only in consequence of man's consciousness of his true divine self, and the more conscious he is of that true self, the greater his welfare. And therefore all that impedes this consciousness, as does every kind of excitement, all that strengthens the erroneous consciousness of one's separate life and weakens the consciousness of one's true self, as every kind of intoxication does, impedes the attainment of true welfare.

286. In the case of a man awakened to consciousness, every form of intoxication, besides hindering the attainment of true

welfare by him, also deceives him, not only by failing to increase that personal welfare which he seeks through stimulation, but by even depriving him of that share of animal welfare which he already possesses.

In addicting himself to any kind of artificial stimulation—smoking, drinking, solemnities, dancing—a man still living on the animal plane, or a child not yet awakened to consciousness, receives full satisfaction from the excitement produced, and needs no repetition of it. But with awakened reason man remarks that every excitement stifles the activity of his reason, and destroys the pain of the contradiction between the demands of the animal and spiritual natures. He therefore requires a repetition and strengthening of the intoxication, and increases his demand until the reason which had awakened within him is altogether stifled. This can only be attained by destroying altogether, or at all events in part, the corporeal life. So that a man with awakened reason, in addicting himself to this sin, fails to ob-

tain the welfare he expects, and falls a victim to the most various and cruel calamities.

287. A man free from intoxication employs in the service of his worldly life all those powers of mind or intellect which he possesses, and can intelligently choose what is best for his animal welfare; whereas a man addicted to intoxication loses even those mental powers which are natural to the animal, and necessary for the avoidance of harm and the reception of pleasure.

288. Such are the consequences of the sin of intoxication for the man who commits it; for those who surround him the consequences are particularly disastrous. This is so, firstly, because, for the production of the means of intoxication, enormous expenditure of labour is necessary; so that a large proportion of the labour of mankind is spent upon the production of intoxicants, the preparation of exciting ceremonies, processions, religious services, monuments, temples and commemorations of every kind. Secondly, because smok-

ing, wine, exciting movements and especially pompous ceremonies, compel weak-minded men, while under these influences, to commit the most insane, coarse, pernicious and cruel actions. This should be understood and borne in mind by the man who is tempted to any form of intoxication.

289. No one while living in the body can altogether destroy the possibility of temporary intoxication by means of food or drink, special external surroundings or stimulating movements, or to the consequent strengthening of his animal consciousness and the weakening of the consciousness of his spiritual self. But if man cannot altogether destroy this tendency towards excitement, every man may reduce it to the smallest possible limits: and this constitutes the struggle with the sin of intoxication which faces everyone.

290. In order to liberate himself from this sin a man must understand and remember that a certain degree of excitement is natural to man as an animal, under special circumstances and at certain

times: but that when consciousness has awakened within him, he should not only refrain from seeking this excitement, but endeavour to avoid it, and cultivate that tranquil state of mind in which the activity of his reason can manifest itself in all its power—that activity through which the greatest welfare may be procured both for the man himself and for the beings that are connected with him.

291. In order to attain to this a man must begin by refraining from adding to that sin of intoxication to which he is accustomed and which has become the habit of his life. If into a man's life there have already entered certain habits of intoxication, recurring periodically and regarded as indispensable by all around him, let him, even if he continue those habits, introduce no new ones, neither imitating others nor inventing for himself. If accustomed to smoke cigarettes, let him refrain from habituating himself to the use of cigars or opium; if accustomed to beer or wine, let him refrain from stronger intoxicants; accustomed to low

bows during prayer at home or in church, or to jumping and dancing during worship, let him refrain from all fresh acts of that kind; if in the habit of keeping certain festivals, let him institute no new ones.

Let him refrain from increasing the means of excitement to which he is accustomed, and he will have already done much towards liberating himself and others from the sin of intoxication. If men would only introduce no new forms of sin, sin would be destroyed; because it originates at a time when there are, as yet, no habits formed, and when it is therefore easy to overcome it; and there always have been and always will be men who free themselves from sin.

292. When a man has become conscious of the folly of this sin, and has firmly decided not to multiply those modes of intoxication which have become habitual to him, then let him cease from smoking and drinking, if he have acquired these habits, or from taking part in the solemnities and festivals in which he formerly

participated, or from exciting movements, if he be accustomed to them.

293. As soon as a man has freed himself from these artificial habits of intoxication in which he has been living, let him begin to free himself also from those states of excitement produced in him by certain food, drink, movements and surroundings that are common to everyone.

294. Although men will never, while in the body, altogether liberate themselves from the excitement and intoxication produced by food, drink, movements and surroundings, the degree of this intoxication may be reduced to the smallest limits. And the more a man awakened to consciousness frees himself from this sin, the clearer will his reason become, the easier will it be for him to strive against all the other sins, the more true welfare will he obtain, the more material welfare will be added to him and the more will he contribute to the welfare of others.

LIV.

STRIVING AGAINST THE SIN OF IDLENESS.

295. The man whose consciousness is awakened is not a self-existent being, satisfying itself and capable of independent welfare; he is God's ambassador, for whom welfare is possible only in proportion to his fulfilment of the will of God. Therefore for a man to serve his separate personality is as unreasonable as it would be for a workman to serve the tool with which he works, to spare his spade or his scythe, instead of spending it in the work which is set him. As it is said in the Gospel, he who wishes to save his bodily life will lose his true life, and only by spending one's bodily life can one obtain true life.

296. To compel others to work for the satisfaction of one's needs is as unreasonable as it would be for a workman to destroy or spoil the tools of his companions in order to preserve or improve the tool he should use up in the performance of the work to which both he and his companions are appointed.

297. But besides depriving himself of true welfare by freeing himself from labour and laying it upon others, such a man also deprives himself of that animal welfare which comes to him through the natural bodily labour necessary for the satisfaction of his needs.

298. Man obtains the greatest welfare of his separate being through the exercise of his powers and through rest, when he lives instinctively like an animal, working and resting just as much as is necessary for his animal life. But as soon as man artificially transfers the labour to others, and arranges for himself artificial rest, he ceases to receive the delight which rest affords.

299. The man who works receives true

delight from rest; whereas, instead of the rest he seeks, the idle man experiences constant uneasiness. Besides this, by artificial idleness, he destroys the very source of pleasure — his health; thus, weakening his body, he deprives himself of the ability to labour, and consequently of the result of labour—true rest, and engenders in himself painful diseases.

300. Such are the results of idleness for the man who commits the sin. For those who surround him the consequences are hurtful, firstly, because, as the Chinese proverb says, "If there be one man who does not work, then there is another who is crying of hunger"; and secondly, because ignorant people, not knowing the dissatisfaction from which idle men suffer, try to imitate them, and experience towards them, instead of good-will, envious, unkind feelings. This should be known to everyone who wishes to subdue the sin of idleness.

301. In order to free oneself from this sin, one must clearly understand and remember that any liberation of oneself

from the labour one has been accustomed to perform will, instead of increasing, diminish the welfare of one's separate personality, and also cause unnecessary injury to others.

302. Although it is impossible to destroy in man's animal being the desire for rest and the aversion to work (according to the Bible, idleness was bliss, and work punishment), still it is at the diminution of this sin, its reduction to the smallest possible dimensions, that man must aim if he would free himself from the sin of idleness.

303. In order to liberate himself from the sin of idleness a man must begin by not exempting himself from any work that he has hitherto done; if he formerly brushed his own clothes, washed his own linen, let him not compel another to do it; if he dispensed with articles produced by other men's labour, let him not now purchase them; if he went about on foot, he should not ride; if he carried his own portmanteau, he should not give it to a porter, and so on. All this seems so in-

significant; but were people to refrain from doing these things they would be free from most of their sins, and from the sufferings resulting from them.

304. Only when a man has learnt to refrain from exempting himself from, and laying upon others, labour formerly performed by him, can he successfully begin to strive against traditional idleness. If he be a peasant, let him now refrain from forcing his wife, when weak, to do what he has leisure to do himself; from hiring the workmen he used to hire; from purchasing the products of labour he used formerly to purchase, but which others dispense with. If he be a rich man, let him discharge his servant, and take care of his things himself, and refrain from purchasing the expensive clothes to which he is accustomed.

305. When a man has succeeded in conquering the idleness he has been accustomed to from childhood, and has descended to the plane of labour on which those around him live, then only can he successfully commence to strive against

the innate sin of idleness by working for the welfare of others even while they rest.

306. The fact that human life, owing to the division of labour, has become so intricate that it is impossible for a man himself to satisfy all his own needs and those of his family, and that in this world one cannot avoid profiting by other men's labour—this fact should not prevent a man from striving to attain a position wherein he may be able to give to others more than he receives from them.

307. In order to be sure of doing this, one should first do for one's self and one's family all that one has time to do; and then, in the service of others, choose, not the work that one likes, and for which there are always many volunteers, such as supervising, teaching and amusing people, but the work that is urgently necessary but unattractive, and avoided by all, as is the case with every kind of common and dirty work.

LV.

STRIVING AGAINST SENSUAL SIN.

308. Man was designed to serve God through the increase of love. The fewer a man's needs, the easier will it be for him to serve God and man, and therefore the more true welfare will he receive through the increase of love within himself.

309. But in addition to the welfare of true life which man receives in proportion to his freedom from sensual sin, his condition is such, that if he attend to his needs only in the degree in which they demand satisfaction, and does not direct his reason to the increase of the pleasure arising from their satisfaction, such satisfaction affords him the greatest welfare attainable from this source. Whereas,

with the increase of one's wants, whether they be satisfied or not, the welfare of earthly life inevitably diminishes.

310. Man will receive the greatest welfare from the satisfaction of his needs of food, drink, sleep, clothing, lodging, when he satisfies them, like an animal, instinctively, not in order to obtain pleasure from food, not when it is refined, but when he is hungry, and from clothes, not when they are very fine, but when he feels cold, and from lodging, not when it is luxurious, but when he takes refuge in it from the weather.

311. A man who has rich dinners, clothing and houses, which he does not need, will receive less pleasure than a man who uses the poorest food, clothing and accommodation, but does so after he has become hungry, cold and wet. So that complicating and providing plenteously the means of satisfying needs does not increase the welfare of the personal life, but rather diminishes it.

312. Superfluity of the means of satisfying needs deprives man of the very source

of the pleasure he derives in satisfying them: it destroys the health of the organisms, for no food affords pleasure to the diseased, weak stomach, no clothing, no houses, can warm a body deficient in blood.

313. Such are the consequences of sensual sin for the man who yields to it. For those around him the results are twofold: firstly, needy men are deprived of those products consumed by the luxurious; secondly, all feeble-minded men witnessing the superfluity of the luxurious but not their suffering, allured by their position and tempted by the same sin, experience towards them, instead of the joyful, brotherly feelings natural to all, painful envy and ill-feeling. It is this that a man must recognise in order that he may successfully strive against sensual sin.

314. To destroy the tendency in the separate being of man of seeking pleasure from the satisfaction of one's needs is impossible as long as man lives in the body, but he may reduce this tendency to the

smallest dimensions, and in doing so consists the struggle with this sin.

315. To attain the utmost freedom from sensual sin, a man must first of all clearly understand and remember that any complication of the means of satisfying his needs will diminish rather than increase his welfare, and cause unnecessary evil to others.

316. If he would free himself from the habit of this sin, a man must begin with refraining from increasing his needs, from changing that to which he is accustomed, from imitating and inventing new wants. He should not begin to drink tea, when he has hitherto lived in good health without it; should not erect a new mansion when he already has one.

To thus refrain seems little, but if people would only do so, nine tenths of the sins and sufferings of mankind would disappear.

317. A man can only commence the struggle with the traditional sin when he carefully refrains from introducing new luxuries into his life; only then can a man

accustomed to drink tea and eat meat, or habituated to champagne and fine horses, gradually break away from what is unnecessary, and exchange luxurious habits for more simple ones.

318. And it is only when he has freed himself from luxurious habits, and descended to the level of the poorest, that a man can begin to strive against innate sensual sin, *i. e.*, diminish his needs in comparison even with the poorest and most abstemious of men.

LVI.

STRIVING AGAINST THE SIN OF AVARICE.

319. The true welfare of man consists in the manifestation of love, and he is moreover placed in such a position that he never knows when he will die; any hour may be his last. Therefore no reasonable man can violate love in the present in order to insure a future which may never come. Yet this is precisely the conduct of those who try to acquire property and keep it from others, in order to insure the future for themselves and their family.

320. But in addition to depriving themselves of true welfare, the people who behave thus fail to attain that welfare of the separate individual which is always accessible to man.

321. It is natural for man to satisfy his needs by labour, and even like certain animals to provide the things he will require in the future; and in so acting he attains the highest possible welfare for his separate being.

322. But the moment a man begins to assert exceptional rights to the articles thus provided or otherwise obtained, the welfare of his separate being not only diminishes, but is even replaced by suffering.

323. The man who trusts the insurance of his future to his labour, to the mutual helpfulness of men and, above all, to the organisation of the universe in such a way that men's lives are as well insured as those of the birds of the air or the lilies of the field—such a man can peacefully surrender himself to all the joys of life; whereas a man who has begun to secure property for the future, can never enjoy a moment's peace.

324. First of all, he never knows for how long he must insure himself—for a month, a year, ten years, or the next

generation. Secondly, cares concerning his property distract him more and more from the simple joys of life. Thirdly, he is always afraid of aggression on the part of others, and struggles incessantly to keep and augment what he has procured, and so, while spending all his life in anxiety for the future, he loses his present life.

325. Such are the consequences of the sin of avarice for the man who yields to it. For those around him the result is want, caused by their being dispossessed.

326. Almost impossible as it is to destroy within one's self the inclination to retain for one's exclusive use the necessary articles of clothing, tools or a piece of bread for the morrow, it is possible to greatly reduce this tendency, and this reduction constitutes the struggle against the sin of avarice.

327. Therefore, in order to free one's self from it, a man must clearly understand and remember that every insurance for the future by the acquirement and protection of property, diminishes rather than increases the welfare of his separate

being, and also inflicts great and unnecessary injury on those among whom the property is acquired and protected.

328. One must commence the struggle with the habit of this sin by refraining from increasing the property one already possesses, whether it be millions of pounds, or a dozen bags of rye for a year's consumption. If men were only to understand that their welfare and life —even their animal life—cannot be insured by the possession of property, and if they cease to augment their property at the expense of others, then most of the calamities from which men suffer would vanish.

329. A man can successfully begin to free himself from his possessions only when he can abstain from augmenting his property. Not until he has liberated himself from the traditional sin of avarice can he commence to strive against the innate sin, *i. e.*, give to others that which is regarded as indispensable to the maintenance of life itself.

LVII.

STRIVING AGAINST THE SIN OF AMBITION.

330. " The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them: not so shall it be among you; but whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant "; such is the Christian teaching. According to this teaching man is sent into the world to serve God; and this service is accomplished by the manifestation of love. Love can be manifested only in the service of mankind; therefore, whenever a man who has awakened to reasonable consciousness strives with his fellow-man, *i. e.*, commits violence, desiring to make another act contrary to his will, he fails to fulfil his destiny, and injures his true welfare.

331. But the man awakened to reasonable consciousness, who enters into conflict with others, not only deprives himself of the welfare of true life, but even fails to attain that welfare of the separate being for which he strives.

332. The man who is still living only an animal life, contends with other beings like a child or an animal only so long as his animal instincts demand this contest; he robs another only when he is hungry, drives another away only when he needs his place; for this contest he employs only physical force, and conquering or being conquered, ceases the strife. Acting thus he attains the highest welfare accessible to him as a separate being.

333. But it is quite otherwise when a man with awakened reason enters into contest. This man employs his reason in the strife, makes it his aim, and therefore never knows when to cease. Being victorious, he is carried away by the desire of further victories, and excites hatred in the conquered which poisons his life; whereas, being conquered, he himself suffers from

humiliation and hatred. So that a man with awakened reason who contends with others, not only fails to increase the welfare of his separate being, but even diminishes it, and replaces it by the sufferings he has himself produced.

334. Firstly, the man who avoids strife, who humbles himself, is free, and can employ his powers upon that which attracts him. Secondly, by loving others and humbling himself before them, he calls forth a responding love from them, and is thus enabled to profit by those advantages that fall to his lot which are connected with this life. Whereas, when a man with awakened reason enters into conflict, he inevitably surrenders his whole life to the effort; and by exciting resistance and hatred in others, prevents the possibility of peaceably enjoying the advantages obtained, as it is necessary to incessantly defend them.

335. Such are the consequences of the sin of ambition for the man who commits it. For those around him the consequences are sufferings of every kind, de-

privations of the conquered and, still worse, feelings of hatred which replace the natural loving feeling of brotherhood.

336. Never as long as he lives will man altogether free himself from the conditions of strife; but the more he succeeds in liberating himself from them according to his powers, the more true welfare will he attain, the more earthly welfare will be added to him and the more will he contribute to the welfare of the world.

337. Thus, in order to liberate himself from the sin of ambition or strife, man must clearly understand and remember that both his true spiritual welfare and his temporal animal welfare will increase in proportion as he diminishes his strife with men and all other creatures, in proportion to his submission and humility and to his habit of offering the other cheek to the smiter and giving his coat to him who would take his cloak.

338. To avoid falling into the habit of this sin, a man must begin by not increasing it; if already in conflict with men or animals and his corporeal life is thus sus-

tained by this conflict, even if he continue the struggle, let him not increase it; let him avoid entering into conflict with yet more beings, and he will already have accomplished much towards freeing himself from the sin. If men would only avoid increasing the strife it would gradually disappear, as there are always those who refrain more and more from strife.

339. If a man has attained that stage in which he no longer augments his conflict with other beings, let him then set to work to diminish and weaken that state of traditional strife in which every man finds himself on entering upon life.

340. When he has succeeded in freeing himself from the conditions of struggle in which he has been educated, let him then endeavour to free himself also from that tendency to strife innate in every man.

LVIII.

STRIVING AGAINST SEXUAL SIN.

341. The object of man's life is to serve God through the manifestation of love to man and all other beings; but he who yields to sexual lust weakens his powers and diverts them from that service, and thus deprives himself of the welfare of true life.

342. But the man who is addicted to sexual lust, in whatever form, besides depriving himself of true welfare, fails to attain even that welfare which he seeks.

343. If a man lives an orderly married life, entering into sexual intercourse only when there can be children, and fulfils the responsibility of educating these children, the inevitable result for the mother is suffering and cares, for the father anxiety

about the mother and children and for both mutual abatement of affection and frequent quarrels between man and wife and between parents and children.

344. If, on the other hand, a man enters into sexual intercourse without the object of fostering and educating the children, if he try to avoid having them or, having them, neglects them, and changes the object of his love, then the welfare of the individual becomes still less possible. The man inevitably undergoes sufferings which are crueller the more he yields to sexual lust; there ensues quarrels, diseases and the weakening of the physical and spiritual powers; and there is not the consolation enjoyed by those living an orderly married life—that of the family, with all its help and joy.

345. Such are the results of sexual sin for the man who commits it; whereas with regard to others, firstly, the person with whom it is committed undergoes the same natural consequences of the sin—loss of both true and temporal welfare, and the same sufferings and diseases; sec-

ondly, there result destruction of children in the germ, infanticide, neglect of children and that appalling evil which ruins the souls of men—prostitution.

346. No animal is able to destroy within itself the tendency towards satisfying the sexual lust; neither can man, except in rare cases. Nor could it be otherwise, for the instinct which insures the existence of the human race will continue as long as the race is needed by the Higher Will.

347. Yet this lust may be reduced to very small dimensions, and by some even replaced by entire chastity. This diminution and reduction, in some cases even to the extent of chastity, constitutes the struggle against sexual sin, as we are told in the Gospel.

348. Therefore if a man would free himself from sexual sin, he must understand and remember that the satisfaction of sexual lust is the necessary condition of the life of every animal, and of man as an animal—but that reasonable consciousness, when awakened in man, demands the opposite, *i. e.*, complete abstinence,

complete chastity. He must understand that in proportion as he addicts himself to sexual lust, he will fail to acquire, not only true, but even temporal, animal welfare, and will cause suffering both to himself and others.

349. To overcome the habit of this sin, a man must first of all refrain from increasing it. If he be chaste, let him not infringe his chastity; if he be married, let him be true to his partner; if he have sexual intercourse with many, let him not invent unnatural forms of vice. Let him refrain from augmenting his sexual sin. If men would do this, many of their sufferings would come to an end.

350. When a man has succeeded in refraining from fresh sin, then let him labour to diminish that sexual sin to which he is still subject; let the externally chaste strive against the unchaste thoughts; let the married strive to diminish and regulate sexual intercourse; let the person who knows many of the opposite sex become true to his or her chosen partner.

351. And if a man has been able to free himself from those habits of sexual lust in which he has hitherto lived, then let him aspire to liberation from the innate tendency to sexual lust common to all.

352. Although only in rare cases are men able to be altogether chaste, still everyone should understand and remember that he can always be more chaste than he formerly was, or can return to the chastity he has lost, and that the nearer he approaches to perfect chastity according to his powers, the more true welfare will he attain, the more earthly welfare will be added to him and the more will he contribute to the welfare of mankind.

PART SEVENTH.



PRAYER.

LIX.

SPECIAL MEANS OF STRIVING AGAINST SINS.

353. If one would avoid deception, one must trust to no one, and to nothing but to reason alone. In order to escape snares one must avoid justifying those actions which are contrary to truth—to life. To avoid falling into sin, one must clearly understand that sin is an evil, causing much harm to man, and depriving him not only of his true welfare, but also of personal welfare, and besides that, one must know the consecutive order in which it is necessary to contend with sins.

354. But even when men know all this, they still fall into sin. The reason is that men either do not clearly know or else

forget who they are—what constitutes their true "self."

355. There is one powerful means by which man may more and more clearly know himself, and remember who he is. This means is prayer.

LX.

PRAYER.

356. From the earliest times it has been acknowledged that prayer is necessary to man.

357. For the majority of men prayer was, and still is, an appeal made to a God, or Gods, with the object of propitiation—an appeal made under certain circumstances, in certain places and in special words or acts.

358. The Christian teaching knows nothing of such prayers, but regards prayer as indispensable, not for avoiding material disasters and acquiring material welfare, but for strengthening man in his conflict with sins.

359. If a man would successfully strive against sins, he must understand and re-

member his position in the world; he must also weigh every act before committing it. For both, prayer is necessary.

360. Christian prayer is therefore of two kinds: that which elucidates for man his position in the world — occasional prayer; and that which accompanies his every action, bringing it to God's judgment, weighing it—continual prayer.

LXI.

OCCASIONAL PRAYER.

361. Occasional prayer is that by means of which a man in his best moments, abstracting himself from all worldly influences, evokes within himself the clearest consciousness of God, and of his relation to God.

362. It is to such prayer that Christ refers in the sixth chapter of Matthew, in contradistinction to the many-worded and public prayers of the Pharisees, and for which he taught that solitude is an indispensable condition. His words in this passage show men how they should not pray.

363. The prayer "Our Father," on the other hand, as well as Christ's prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, shows us how

we should pray, and what should constitute that true occasional prayer which, by clearing man's consciousness of true life, his relation to God and his duty in the world, strengthens his spiritual powers.

364. Such prayer may be the expression in his own words of a man's relation to God; but it has also consisted, and will always consist for all men, in the repetition of the utterances and thoughts of men who have lived in former times and expressed their relation to God; as well as in spiritual union with these men and with God. So Christ prayed, using the words of the Psalm, and we truly pray in repeating the words of Christ—and not of Christ only, but also of Socrates, Buddha, Lao-Tze, Pascal and others, if we enter into that same spiritual state in which they lived, and which they expressed in certain words that have come down to us.

365. True occasional prayer is, therefore, not that which is uttered at certain stated times, but that only to which man gives expression in moments of the great-

est spiritual realisation. Such moments, which are experienced by all, are sometimes called forth by suffering or the approach of death, and sometimes come without any external cause. They should be valued by man as his greatest treasure, and used for the greater and greater enlightenment of his consciousness; for it is only in these moments that our progress and approach to God is accomplished.

366. Such prayer requires neither meetings nor any external influences, but only complete solitude and freedom from all distractions.

367. This prayer raises men from a lower to a higher plane of life—from the animal to the human, from the human to the divine.

368. It is by means of such prayer only that man comes to know himself—his divine nature,—feels those limits which confine his divine nature and, feeling them, strives to rend them asunder, and thus expands them.

369. This prayer, by clearing man's consciousness, renders it impossible for

him to commit the sins into which he formerly fell, and reveals to him as sin that which he did not formerly so recognise.

LXII.

CONTINUAL PRAYER.

370. In his progress from the animal life to the true spiritual life, in his birth to new life, in his conflict with sin, every man's relation to sin is always of three different kinds. Some sins are overcome by man; they are chained like captured beasts, and only from time to time remind one by their growling that they still live. These sins are left behind. There are other sins which man has only just discovered, actions he has been performing all his life without regarding them as sins, the sinfulness of which he has only just perceived in consequence of the clearing of his consciousness by occasional prayer. Man now sees the sinfulness of these actions; but he is so accustomed to perform

them, he has only so lately and as yet so indistinctly understood their sinfulness, that he does not at present even attempt to overcome them. There is a third kind of action, the sinfulness of which man clearly sees, against which he already strives, which he at times commits—yielding to sin,—while at other times he avoids it, thus conquering sin.

371. It is for the conquest of this last species of sin that continual prayer is necessary. Continual prayer consists in reminding man at every moment of his life, during all his actions, what constitutes his life and welfare; and therefore in those cases in which man has the power to conquer his animal nature by spiritual consciousness this prayer helps him to do so.

372. Continual prayer is the perpetual consciousness of the presence of God, the ambassador's continual consciousness, during his mission, of the presence of Him by Whom he was sent.

373. Birth into new life, liberation from the fetters of the animal nature, emanci-

pation from sin, are accomplished only by slow effort. Occasional prayer, by enlightening the consciousness of man, reveals his sin to him. Sin at first appears unimportant, supportable, but the longer a man lives, the more urgent becomes the necessity of freeing himself from it. And if a man only avoid the snare which conceals it, he inevitably enters into conflict with sin.

374. But from the very first attempt to overcome sin, man feels his impotence. Sin allures him with all the attractiveness of habit, whereas man can oppose nothing to the sin except his consciousness that it is evil; and so, knowing what he is doing to be evil, he yet continues to commit this evil.

375. There is only one way out of this position. Some religious teachers see a way of escape through a power called grace, which sustains man in his conflict with sin and which is acquired through certain performances called sacraments. Others see a way of escape through faith in the redemption accomplished for man

by the death of the Christ-God. Others again see a way through petitionary prayer to God for the strengthening of man's powers in the conflict with sin.

376. But none of these means really facilitates man's conflict with sin. Notwithstanding grace acquired through sacraments, faith in the redemption and petitionary prayer, no man who has sincerely commenced the conflict with sin can help feeling his utter weakness in the face of the power of sin, and the hopelessness of striving against it.

377. The apparent hopelessness of the contest arises especially from the fact that man, understanding the falsity of sin, desires immediate freedom from it, in which he is encouraged by various erroneous teachings about redemption, sacraments and so forth, and that, feeling the impossibility of immediately liberating himself, he neglects those humble efforts which he might make to gradually free himself from sin.

378. But as all great changes in the material world are accomplished, not sud-

denly, but by slow and gradual growth and shedding off, so also in the spiritual world liberation from sin and advance towards perfection are accomplished only by steady opposition to sin—by the destruction, one by one, of its minutest particles.

379. It is not in man's power at once to free himself from sins, the habits of which have been accumulating for many years, but it is in his power to refrain from those actions which draw him into sin, to diminish the attractiveness of sin, to deprive himself of the possibility of committing it, to cut off the hand or pluck out the eye which causes him to offend. It is possible to do this every day and every minute, and, in order to be able to do so, continual prayer is necessary.

LXIII.

WHAT DOES THE CHRISTIAN LIFE OFFER IN THE PRESENT?

380. There are religious teachings which promise men full and complete welfare, not only in the future life, but also in the present. Some even understand the Christian teaching in this way. These men say that one need only follow the teaching of Christ—deny himself and love others—in order to render his life one of unceasing happiness. Other religious teachings see in human life endless unavoidable sufferings, which man must bear, hoping for compensation in the future. The Christian teaching is understood in this way also. The former see in life continual happiness, the latter continual suffering.

381. Neither of these views is correct.

Life is neither happiness nor sufferi
It may appear to be happiness or suffe
ing to the man who regards his separat
being as his *self;* but only for this sel
can there be happiness or suffering.
Life, according to the true Christian
teaching, is neither happiness nor suffer-
ing, but the birth and growth of the true
spiritual *self* of man, which knows neither
happiness nor suffering.

382. According to the Christian teach-
ing the life of man is the continual in-
crease of his consciousness of love. And
as the growth of man's soul—the increase
of love—is in continual progress, and as
the work of God which is attained by this
growth is continually being accomplished,
the man who understands his life, accord-
ing to the Christian teaching, as consisting
in the increase of love, for the establish-
ment of the kingdom of God, can never
be unhappy or unsatisfied.

383. He may encounter on his way
through life pleasures and sufferings for
his animal personality of which he cannot
help being conscious—pleasures which he

can but enjoy, and sufferings which he cannot but feel; but he can never experience complete happiness (and should not therefore desire it), and he can never be wholly unhappy (and therefore should not fear sufferings nor desire to avoid them, if they stand in his path).

384. He who lives the Christian life does not attribute great importance to his pleasures, does not look upon them as the fulfilment of his desires, but regards them as merely casual experiences to be met with on his way through life—as that which is added unto him who seeks the kingdom of God and His truth. And his suffering he regards not as something that ought not to be, but as experiences as inevitable in life as friction in work; he knows also that as friction is the sign that work is being accomplished, so also are sufferings a sign of the accomplishment of the work of God.

385. He who lives the Christian life is always free, because that which constitutes the meaning of his life—the removal of the obstacles which hinder love, and

the consequent increase of love and establishment of the kingdom of God—is precisely that which he always desires and which is inevitably being accomplished in his life. He is always at peace, because nothing can happen to him which he does not desire.

386. It must not be supposed that a man who lives the Christian life always realises this freedom and peace, always accepts pleasures without being captivated by them, as something casual which he does not desire to retain, or sufferings as the indispensable condition of progress in life. A Christian may be temporarily captivated by pleasures, and try to produce and retain them; he may be temporarily troubled by sufferings, regarding them as something unnecessary, something that might have not happened; but while enduring the loss of pleasures and the fear and pain of sufferings a Christian recalls to mind his Christian dignity, his mission; and then both pleasures and sufferings assume their right place, and he again becomes free and peaceful.

387. So that, even in a worldly sense, the position of a Christian is not worse, but better, than that of the non-Christian. "Seek ye first His truth and all the rest will be added unto you" signifies that the earthly joys of life are not shut off from the Christian, but are quite accessible to him, only with this difference,—that whereas the joys of the non-Christian may be artificial and pass into satiety, and his sufferings appear to be unnecessary and without escape, for a Christian, joys are more simple and natural, and therefore more intense and never productive of satiety, and sufferings can never be so painful nor appear so meaningless as they do to the non-Christian.

Such is the position of a Christian in the present life. But what can he expect in the future?

LXIV.

WHAT AWAITS MAN IN THE FUTURE?

388. Man cannot, while living in this world in a bodily form, picture life to himself otherwise than in space and time; he therefore naturally asks *where* he *will be* after death.

389. But this question is wrongly put. When the divine essence of the soul, which is spiritual, independent of time and space, enclosed in the body in this life—when this divine essence leaves the body it ceases to be conditioned by time or space, and therefore one cannot say of this essence that it *will be.* It *is.* As Christ said, "Before Abraham was, I am." So also with us all. If we are, we always have been, and shall be. We *are.*

390. It is precisely the same with the question, *Where* shall we be? When we say *where*, we speak of a place. But the idea of place is only caused by that condition of separation from all else, in which we have been placed. At death this separation will cease, and thus, for those still living in this world, we shall be everywhere and nowhere. For us locality will not exist.

391. There have been many different conjectures as to what we shall be and where we shall be after death. But none of these conjectures, from the coarsest to the most refined, can satisfy reasonable man. The voluptuous bliss of Mohammed is too coarse and is evidently incompatible with the true idea of man and God. The ecclesiastical representation of heaven and hell is also incompatible with the idea of a God of love. The transmigration of souls is less coarse, but it also retains the idea of the separateness of individual existence; the common conception of Nirvana removes all the coarseness of this representation, but transgresses the de-

mand of reason—the reasonableness of existence.

392. Therefore, no representation of what will be after death gives such an answer as will satisfy a reasonable man.

393. Nor can this be otherwise. The question is wrongly formulated. Human reason, which can work only in the conditions of time and space, seeks to give an answer concerning that which is outside of these conditions. One thing only is known to reason: that the divine essence does exist, that it has been growing while in this world and that, having attained a certain extent of growth, it has passed out of these conditions.

394. Will this essence still continue its functions in a separate form? Will the increase of love produce a new accumulation? These are but guesses, and of such guesses there may be many; but none of them can give certainty.

395. One thing alone is certain and indubitable, that which Christ said when he was dying: "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit"—that is to say, at death I re-

turn whence I came. And if I believe *that* from which I have emanated to be reason and love (and these two realities I know), then I shall joyously return to Him, knowing that it will be well with me. Not only have I no regret, but I rejoice at the thought of the passage which awaits me.

THE END.

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